

SUFISM IN SINDH AND PUNJAB: POETRY OF SHAH ABDUL LATIF AND BULLEH SHAH

*Thesis submitted to the University of Delhi for
the award of the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

NEELAM MITTAL

Under the Supervision of

Dr. RAVI PRAKASH TEKCHANDANI



**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN INDIAN LANGUAGES
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MAY 2019

DECLARATION

I, Neelam Mittal, hereby declare that the thesis, entitled “**Sufism in Sindh and Punjab: Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah**”, written by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr Ravi Prakash Tekchandani, Associate Professor, Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi, is an original work. I further declare that the present research work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma under the University of Delhi or any other University / Institution.

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Neelam Mittal

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ABSTRACT

The present study focuses on Sufism in two contiguous regions, Sindh and Punjab, with special reference to two contemporaneous eighteenth century poets, Shah Abdul Latif (1690-1752 A.D.) and Bulleh Shah (1680 - 1748 A.D.). It is the eclecticism and inclusivity of the Sufi paradigm, its emancipation from narrow class and caste confines while consciously distancing itself from external ritualistic observances of religion and its endorsement of religion as not about making an uproar or a squabble rather as a re-instatement of harmony and peace, which has earned place of regard and esteem for those Sufi saint poets who exhibit the quintessential Sufi instinct. The present study attempts a re-hash at the two prominent Sufi poets, Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah. With a lucid understanding of the socio-cultural and religious background to the emergence of Sufism in Sindh and Punjab, the research moves on to a close reading of the two poets under consideration and conduct a comparative study of Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah and a search for common thoughts. In doing so, the analysis positions the two poets within the matrix of the mystical framework of the preceding Sufi poets from the Middle East while simultaneously keeping in mind the mystical edifice already existing in India. A close study of the enunciations of Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah rooted in the spatio-temporal and socio-cultural framework of Sindh and Punjab respectively, the reader tends to transcend their insular centripetal consciousness and to find their feet with the cosmic consciousness and the universal mystical instinct inscribed in the poetic articulations of Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah. The method of comparative thematology enables this process through an inter-textual analysis of the two poets.

‘Sufism’ as an ‘-ism’ cannot be pinned down to a single monolithic delineation because there are n-number of ways in which Sufis have attempted defining human connection with the divine source of life. . In Jalaluddin Rumi’s *Fihi Ma Fihi* (It is What It Is), ‘It’ refers to his work which makes an attempt at unravelling the mystery of God and the universe. Doug Marman in the “Introduction” to “*Discourses*” of *Rumi*, remarks:

This is the same as the Muslim saying, “there is no God but God. In other words, here, all the stories and explanations are saying nothing more than this. There is no more to reality than reality. God is. Reality is. It is what it is. Explanations cannot explain it. Words cannot reveal it.”¹

Three schools of speculation about the divine being existed: ‘Ijadiyya’, ‘Shuhudiyya’, and ‘Wujudiyya’. ‘Ijadiyya’ adheres to the theistic framework and believes in the concept that God created the world out of nothing and that his essence is completely different from his creation. ‘Shuhudiyya’ believes in moderate pantheism and postulates that the universe is transcended by God’s majesty; that the universe is a mirror in which divine attributes are reflected. ‘Wujudiyya’ is monistic and believes in “hama ost” (“All is He”). The difference between the ‘shuhudis’ and the ‘wujudis’ is, hence, that the former maintains a certain un-transcended gap between the creator and his creation, whereas the ‘wujudis’ nullify this hiatus by opening up the possibility of merger with the Supreme being from whom everything emanates and into whom all existence will finally unite. When the ‘Shuhudis’ postulate that ‘All is from Him’, we enter a domain of moderate pantheism, where God’s reality transcends the universe and its components in an over-arching benediction. However, this understanding of the relationship between God and human being left enough scope for misuse of the concept of God’s omnipotence or authority when the human intermediary presents himself as God’s deputy on earth and assumes an overweening authority, originally emanating from God and now vested in God’s appointee on earth. The ruse was employed by Aurangzeb and his governor Ahmad Sirhindi in exploiting the innocent masses, themselves assuming divine authority, though without divine benediction, eliciting absolute submission from the subjects.

In the present research, the focus is on ‘wujudis’ and their mystical world-view as endorsed by eminent Sufi poets like Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah, which coheres very well with the Vedantic ‘advaitic’ framework. The present research also

¹ Doug Marman. “Introduction”. *“Discourses” of Rumi (or Fihi Ma Fihi)*. Trans. A.J.Arberry. 2000. p xviii.

makes an attempt to see the parallelisms in the gestalt of the emergence of Sufism in India and the prevalent devotional Bhakti tradition. It dwells upon how both like-minded contemporaneous tendencies, which retract from the official religion make space for the layman, till then relegated to the margins by the elitist ecclesiastical clergy. One reason behind this large scale appreciation of Sufi thought is their eclecticism which makes it appealing to people of different religious sentiments across the globe. There is a palpable impact of Christianity, Neo-Platonism and Buddhism. As Sufism arrives on the soil of the Indian sub-continent in the 8th century B.C., there is an irresistible impact of the Indian Vedantic thought on Sufism.

Folk narratives play a very significant role in bolstering the belief of people in virtues and values by which they live. The topography of Sindh as well as Punjab is evocative of the imagination of the common folk and allows the layman to indulge in and re-live those folk-narratives which form the psychological repertoire of the people. The question about the truthfulness and veracity of these narratives is redundant.

The path traversed by the mystic pronounced in the Indian mystical treatise, the *AshtavakraGeeta* and the one traversed by a Sufi, as delineated by a Sufi scholar, culminates in the parallel description of union between “Gyanam gyeyyam tatha gyaata”(knowledge, known, and knower). This is the heart of Sufi understanding of the hermeneutics of human efforts to attain the divine Beloved. Here is the creation of an interface between the two aspects of divine connection with His creation: ‘Huwiyyat’ and ‘aniyyat’. While the former is a realization of the divine Being as reflected in his creation, an intuitive ascent towards God’s existence; the latter entails God’s exhibiting His grandeur in the created world, a downward materialization of God’s presence in the created world. Coalescence of the two aspects of God’s existence leads to a non-dualistic worldview, where the seeker experiences a sense of identity between supposed dichotomies like inside/outside and human/divine. This is how the Sufis reconcile the transcendence of the divine Being with the immanence of the same divine Reality in every trace of God’s creation.

Sufism can play a vital role in harmonizing Hindu-Muslim friction. In today’s world of segregationist politics and pervasive communal and divisive impulses, there

is a requisite need for revival of the Sufi impulse. Their unreserved synchronization and the impetus of mystical evolution in a pluralistic society is the need of the day. Where on the one hand, in today's fast-moving world of scintillating veneer, pompousness, rationalism and intellectualism, Sufi paradigm appears to be an out-dated excrescence, on the other, it has become the quintessential need of the time. In the modern world of communal conflict, splintered consciousness, materialism, utilitarianism and self-centred secession from the common weal, Sufism appears as an antidote to salvage and retrieve the mind of all human ills, flaws and fallacies.

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INTRODUCTION

The present study focuses on Sufism in two contiguous regions, Sindh and Punjab, with special reference to two contemporaneous eighteenth century poets, Shah Abdul Latif (1690-1752 A.D.) and Bulleh Shah (1680-1748 A.D.). It is the eclecticism and inclusivity of the Sufi paradigm, its emancipation from narrow class and caste confines while consciously distancing itself from external ritualistic observances of religion and its endorsement of religion as not about making an uproar or a squabble rather as a re-instatement of harmony and peace, which has earned a place of regard and esteem for those Sufi saint poets who exhibit the quintessential Sufi instinct. These true saint poets have kept Sufi thinking alive and prevalent world-wide. The present study attempts a re-hash at the two prominent Sufi poets, Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah.

Existing Studies

Particular encyclopaedias on Sufism, which give a panoramic view of the emergence of Sufism and the chief Sufi figures and variants on Sufi understanding of life are available. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram have brought forth a twelve volume *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Majid Fakhry's *A History of Islamic Philosophy* is another very informative reading. Significant texts which dwell upon the socio-cultural ethos of Sindh and Punjab are available. For instance, U.T.Thakur's *Sindhi Culture* (1959), Dr. Motilal Jotwani's *Sindhi Literature and Society* (1979) and *Sufis of Sindh* (1986). L.H.Ajwani's *History of Sindhi Literature* (1970) is a landmark in the exposition of the connection between Sufism and the Sindhi way of life, and the folk-narratives comprising the raw material of Sindhi literature. K. R. Malkani's book *The Sindh Story* (1984) and Baldev B. Matlani's *Sindhi Medieval Literature* (1998) initiate and orient the readers into the perspicuous aspects of the backdrop of Sufism in Sindh. A fresh glance at the socio-historical aspect of Punjab is gained through readings like Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal's *The History of Punjabi Literature* (1992) and Vinod Shahi's *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Paath* (2012). Further, there is no dearth of secondary readings on Sufi literature, although there is no existing full-fledged comparative study of the two poets grounded in the socio-cultural time-space

matrix of Sindh and Punjab that may enable an understanding of the fabric of Sufism in the two regions.

Research objective

Indecipherable are the mysteries of the universe. The most esoteric truths lie open like a book inscribed in the world of nature, and yet so abstruse and unapproachable. Says Rumi:

What shall I say, what think? For this tale

Is too high for our limited and contingent being.¹

The root of the problem is well-pronounced by Rumi. Human self, in spite of “limited” and “contingent” faculties and capabilities, aims to know the mystery of the universe and the truth about the meaning and purpose of his own existence. He is no less than the over-reacher like Christopher Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus and is doomed to fail like the Greek mythological figure Icarus, the son of Daedalus, who flew too close to the sun with waxen wings. Both Faustus and Icarus are undone by complacency and ‘hubris’. Faustus aims at becoming greater than the God. His offense is that he is the transgressor of his human condition. In a bid to rise above God, he topples down to the position below his very humanity. Sufis differ in that they make a humble attempt to know their place in the universe. They are out on a mission to delve deep into the mystery of life and the truth of human existence. Instead of following the trodden path, the Sufis chart their own philosophical and mystical trajectory. A Sufi is a self-fashioner and the pitfalls in the path of such an emancipatory ethos are many. Sufism defies all fixities and all reductive definitions. So does the Sufi paradigm transcend a fixed pathway to the attainment of truth. Sufi voice is the voice of the inner self; call it the soul, ‘*ruh*’ or the ‘*atman*’. When phenomenal discourse and its articulation in worldly wise speech patterns become inadequate in expressing the inmost instinctual feelings, the Sufi poet prescribes “silence”:

I am silent. Speak thou, O soul of soul of soul,

From desire of whose face every atom grew articulate.²

¹ *The Essential Rumi*. Trans. Coleman Barks. 1996. Web. 18 Nov. 2018. p 9

² *Ibid*. p 7

Reason or rational faculty in the sense of human intellect turns inadequate while traversing the mystical path of real-izing the connection with the divine source of all creation:

And O reason, to gain eternal life, tread everlastingly
the way of death.
Keep God in remembrance till self is forgotten.
That you may be lost in the Called, without distraction
of caller and Called.³

The question that needs to be addressed is: how does a Sufi understand or arrive at the One-ness with the Supreme Being. What is the *modus operandi* or the *logos* behind it? The quest is perplexing, and simultaneously stimulating, considering that the Sufi paradigm transcends logic or rational discourse.

A compulsive desire to unearth the quintessential meaning of life has driven mankind to the mystics with various spiritual underpinnings. Sufis are the mystics on the path to the attainment of truth about oneself and about the universe. The quest is challenging, the path undetermined and the destination unknown. There are certain areas which sustain no reasoning and no logic, for instance, the concept of beauty, the appeal of a painting and the fascination with a musical note or a certain verbal or gestural stance of an orator. Similarly, the meaning of life and death, the working of dreams and the sub-conscious and the reason behind human existence are questions with no definite, verifiable answers, corroborated by logic or reason. These queries cannot be answered with certainty. It is not possible to endorse answers to these questions with absolute truth value and with proof attesting to their legitimacy and veracity. They belong to the realm of the esoteric, the mysterious and the enigmatic shadowy world. Yet, somewhere there emerges a spark of enlightenment when a saint poet like Bulleh Shah says, “Aisa jagia gyaan palitaa...”⁴ (“what a spark of knowledge is kindled...”⁵). In this moment, as Krishna P. Bahadur remarks: “some lucky man understands and grasps them now and then; a lover intoxicated with love, a devotee drunk with faith, or a hermit whose eyes are set on what others can’t see.”⁶ The present research aims at arriving at some of the truths of the meaning of human

³ *Selected Poems from the Divani Shamsi Tabriz*. Ed. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1994. p 17

⁴ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 94

⁵ Bulleh Shah: *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 223.

⁶ Krishna P. Bahadur. *Sufi Mysticism*. 1999. p 88

life with a certain level of conviction and authenticity by dwelling upon the Sufi poets from Sindh and Punjab, in particular Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah.

Scope of the Research

The scope of the research lies in new ideas emerging out of the questions which are persistently raised by the reading of the poetry of Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah:

- (i) Wherefrom emerge such striking parallels in the Sufi poetry of the two poets belonging to two different territorial regimes?
- (ii) What were the extant mystical and religious trends prevalent in the North-Western part of India during the emergence of Sufism in Sindh and Punjab?
- (iii) What were the reasons for the flowering and flourishing of Sufism in the Indian subcontinent?

In this regard, parallel strands of the Indian devotional Bhakti tradition, the Natha-yogic tradition and Buddhism, as the prevalent religious strands come into play and their mystical interaction with the migrant Sufi paradigm from the Middle East is scrutinized. What was the Indian brand of Sufism? How Sufi non-adherence and non-conformity to official institutional religion enabled its essential syncretic and eclectic character?

With a lucid understanding of the socio-cultural and religious background to the emergence of Sufism in Sindh and Punjab, the research moves on to a close reading of the two poets under consideration and conducts a comparative study of Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah. Attempting to derive particular inferences while beginning with general socio-cultural and historical conditions of Sindh and Punjab, we often arrive at a larger understanding of the meaning of life, carrying a universal validity. And here lies the overarching scope of the present research: not to stick to the particularities of human existence, but moving on to the possibility that the micro-narratives or the little narratives can conjure a larger picture of the macro-narrative of the riddle of human existence.

Methodology

Primary texts and secondary readings elucidating and explicating the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah have been used. However, a delving deep into the socio-

historical and cultural background of the two spatio-temporal regimes is understood as necessary to place the two poets, chronotopically, in their respective topical frameworks and at the same time to raise curiosity about the inscription of universal concerns and cosmic consciousness in these poets. The research attempts to conduct a close reading of poetry, while contextualizing it in its social, religious and historical background. The methodology employed in the present research shall be the discussion of select poets from the perspective of comparative thematology. In doing so, the following texts act as primary readings: Kartar Singh Duggal's *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse* (1996) and Elsa Kazi's translation called *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif* (1965) as the primary texts, along with the original Sindhi and Punjabi versions, rendered in Devnagri script by Dr Motilal Jotwani in his book *Shah Latif ka Kavya* (1969) and Vinod Shahi's *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path* (2012). The reason for looking at the Devnagri scripts of the original texts is that this is a route through which we can attempt to get a first-hand feel of what the Punjabi and Sindhi texts read and sound like. However, wherever the English translation of the Devnagri text is not available, the researcher has given her own translation via Hindi translation or Hindi paraphrase of the source text, whichever available. A few other books like Kalyan B. Advani's *Sachal* (1971), G. Allana's *Four Classical Poets of Sindh* (1996), and Lochan Singh Buxi's *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab* (1994) have been used for their valuable primary text materials. The researcher intends to move from the general to the particular; from the larger historical, socio-cultural and religious components to the particular poets, their existential vantage point and the hermeneutics of life, which finds a profound rendering in the poetry of Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah.

Hypothesis

Keeping in mind the fact that comparative study of the two poets Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah has not been conducted prior to the present research, an attempt has been made to understand their focal points, their appraisal and analyses of human conduct, their interpretation and evaluation rendered in their imaginative flights which construe the meaning or lack of meaning of human life and its connection with the divine realm. The research is poised on the following assumptions:

- (i) Beginning with the socio-cultural and historical understanding of the backdrop of Sindh and Punjab, the present research moves on to their impact on the enunciations of the two Sufi poets, Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah. The first assumption is that the research would enable a move in the direction of situating Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah within the framework of Sufi poets, both their predecessors and their contemporaries.
- (ii) The proposition that the reason for the sustenance and abiding aspect of these Sufi saint poets is their unprejudiced and sincere take on the essence of human existence and the meaning of life and death. Another reason for their perennial and enduring relevance could be the impact of their itinerary in their quest for the meaning of life. The result seems to be their transcendence of narrow, restricted and insular consciousness and a move towards a broader understanding of the quintessential meaning of life.
- (iii) Texts, poets and poetic enunciations do not thrive in a vacuum. The ‘zeit geist’ of the age and the discourses floating in that spacio-temporal atmosphere, are bound to make an impact on the emergent creative activity of the period. Similarly, Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah must be part and parcel of the mystical as well as the creative arena of those times. A re-hash at the prominent Sufi poets of the time, as well as an understanding of the existing mystical trends in the Indian peninsula, shall elucidate the place occupied by Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah in the frame of Indian mysticism.

Chapterization

The thesis is divided into five chapters.

Chapter one, “Understanding Sufism”, makes an attempt at defining a term which defies definition. ‘Sufism’ as an ‘-ism’ cannot be pinned down to a single monolithic delineation because there are n-number of ways in which Sufis have attempted defining human connection with the divine source of life. The road is tentative and the destination is wrapped in mystery. The journey of a Sufi is described as a lonesome journey, conducted through introspection in the silence of the heart. Sufi terminology like ‘waqt’, ‘hal’, ‘wajd’, ‘wujud’, ‘tawajud’, ‘uns’, ‘haybat’, ‘huwiyyat’, ‘aniyyat’, ‘haqq’

and ‘khalq’ are described at length. In this chapter, the stages in the spiritual development of a Sufi are brought forth from various sources: the stations as described by Shihab-ud-din Suhrawardi (1154-91 A.D.), the Persian text *Dabistan Mazahib*, Ali Hujwiri’s *Kashf al- Mahjub (The Revelation of the Veiled)*, and Shah Abdul Karim’s description of a person situated in the four stages of Sufi attainment: ‘Shariat’, ‘Tariqat’, ‘Haqiqat’ and ‘Marfat’. The chapter makes space to dwell upon eminent Sufi philosophers under three headings: the Early Period of Sufism (8th -10th Century), the Middle Period of Sufism (11th -15th Century), and the Later Period of Sufism (16th -18th Century). In doing so, the chapter presents a panoramic view of the ramifications of the meanings attached with Sufism and the evolution of Sufism from its inception till its maturation. In Jalaluddin Rumi’s *Fihi Ma Fihi (It is What It Is)*, ‘It’ refers to his work which makes an attempt at unravelling the mystery of God and the universe. Doug Marman in the “Introduction” to *“Discourses” of Rumi*, remarks:

This is the same as the Muslim saying, “there is no God but God. In other words, here, all the stories and explanations are saying nothing more than this. There is no more to reality than reality. God is. Reality is. It is what it is. Explanations cannot explain it. Words cannot reveal it.”⁷

The mystical path of Sufism is disseminated invariably by the “Sufi practitioners and peripatetic dervishes.”⁸ The emphasis of the Sufi mystics is on the inner spiritual dimension and not on the external observances of religion. There are two-fold views regarding the role played by Sufism in India: one, eulogizing Sufism as imbued with the impulse of quashing communal conflict and as a leveller against diverse religious drives to the common humanitarian impulse; two, Sufism as a foreign concept which reminds of the Islamic invasions and the devastation reckoned by them in India. Aziz Ahmad in an article “Sufism and Hindu Mysticism”, remarks that “the role of Sufis in India has been over-estimated and over-idealized as eclectic and as a bridge between Hinduism and Islam.”⁹ It is true that all the early Islamic

⁷ Doug Marman. Introduction. *“Discourses” of Rumi (or Fihi Ma Fihi)*. Trans. A.J.Arberry. 2000. p xviii.

⁸ Jurgen Wasim Frembgen. *The Friends of God: Sufi Saints in Islam*. 2006. p1.

⁹ Aziz Ahmad. “Sufism and Hindu Mysticism”. *Sufism and Society in Medieval India*. ed. Raziuddin Aquil. 2010. p 43.

mystics did not propagate a sense of communal parity by foregrounding the primacy of the humanitarian impulse over and above any kind of schismatic and discriminative politics. Aziz Ahmad brings to notice how at a certain historical juncture, Sufi hagiography competitively vied with Hindu yogis and the stories of miracles performed by them. Ahmed calls it a trend of “competitive spirituality”:

Miracles like flying in the air in competition with a Hindu yogi were attributed to Safi-ud-din Kaziruni. Miracles of proselytization were accredited to Jalal-ud-din Bukhari and contests of spiritual strength between Sufis like Muhamadi Bilgrami and Hindu yogis were recorded as late as the 18th century.¹⁰

There is a panorama of Sufi figures with regard to their position vis-a-vis conventional religiosity. On the one hand, the spectrum of Sufi poets and philosophers present those Sufi orders more inclined towards the religious law. For them, the divine path could not be trodden with the neglect of orthodoxy. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, in the preface to the second volume of the *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*, discuss how classical Sufism was firm on and tenaciously adhered to the tenets of “Islamic theology, personal devotion to God and trust (tawakkul) in Him, personal loyalty to the prophet of Islam, allegiance to the Quran and the ‘Shariat.’”¹¹ This was allied with a life of renunciation and asceticism. However, there is a gradual development of the khanqah stage between 1100-1400 AD. Here, we see an emergence of the ‘silsilah-tariqah’ system, with a widening of perspectives and assimilation of ideas from the intellectual and cultural milieu of the regions concerned. ‘Silsilah’ was the chain of saintly genealogy where the teacher passed on his mystical responsibilities to his students. ‘Tariqah’ was the well-charted path explored and carved by the Sufi saint and followed by the ‘murids’, the assiduous mystical aspirants. This phase resulted in the emergence of Sufism as a mass movement and its coming close to the heart of the layman. The result was the immense momentousness attached with a patron saint and his shrine in the lands where Sufi thought subsisted.

¹⁰ Aziz Ahmad. “Sufism and Hindu Mysticism”. *Sufism and Society in Medieval India*. ed. Raziuddin Aquil. 2010. p 43.

¹¹ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p vii.

Three schools of speculation about the divine being existed: 'Ijadiyya', 'Shuhudiyya', and 'Wujudiyya'. 'Ijadiyya' adheres to the theistic framework and believes in the concept that God created the world out of nothing and that his essence is completely different from his creation. 'Shuhudiyya' believes in moderate pantheism and postulates that the universe is transcended by God's majesty; that the universe is a mirror in which divine attributes are reflected. 'Wujudiyya' is monistic and believes in "hama ost" ("All is He"). The difference between the 'shuhudis' and the 'wujudis' is, hence, that the former maintains a certain un-transcended gap between the creator and his creation, whereas the 'wujudis' nullify this hiatus by opening up the possibility of merger with the Supreme being from whom everything emanates and into whom all existence will finally unite. When the 'Shuhudis' postulate that 'All is from Him', we enter a domain of moderate pantheism, where God's reality transcends the universe and its components in an over-arching benediction. However, this understanding of the relationship between God and human being left enough scope for misuse of the concept of God's omnipotence or authority when the human intermediary presents himself as God's deputy on earth and assumes an overweening authority, originally emanating from God and now vested in God's appointee on earth. The ruse was employed by Aurangzeb and his governor Ahmad Sirhindi in exploiting the innocent masses, themselves assuming divine authority, though without divine benediction, eliciting absolute submission from the subjects.

The renowned Sufi saint of the twelfth century, Muin-ud-din Chishti (1143-93 A.D.) believed in Sufism as "neither a knowledge nor a form (rasm); it is a particular ethical discipline ('akhalq') of the mystics."¹² This discipline entails stringent adherence to the 'shariat', leading to the mystical path 'tariqah' moving on to gnosis 'marifah' and truth 'haqiqa'. In this process, the significance of the 'hadis' (scriptural exegesis and the religious law) is not to be undermined. Very aptly, Aziz Ahmad remarks that the approach of the Sufi orders towards Hinduism and extraneous mystical ideas shows a parallel graph, "which begins with hostility, passes through a phase of co-existence and culminates in tolerance and understanding."¹³ Acceptance of the 'otherness' of the other requires a time lag, a breathing interlude. The most emphatic stride in this direction is

¹² Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram., eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p 47.

¹³ Ibid. p 47.

taken by the Shattari and the Qadiri orders. The Shattaris moved away from extreme orthodoxy, assimilated the Indian yogic elements, the asanas (yogic postures) and the *samadhi* (meditative states). Its most famous Sufi, Muhammad Ghaus, was held in great esteem by King Akbar:

Muammad Ghaus held Hindu mystics in veneration and his 'Bahr-al-hayat' is the first treatise written by a Muslim in India on the practices of the yogis.¹⁴

The other tolerant order, open to mystical syncretism, is the Qadiri order, which assimilated traits from Indian mysticism during the temporal span of Dara Shikoh and princess Jahan Ara. On the other extreme stands the intolerant Naqshbandi order, "so hostile to Hinduism and to any form of syncretism."¹⁵ Yet, even the strictly orthodox Naqshbandis show ripples of the contradictory impulse in the direction of liberalization of mystical beliefs. Naqshbandi personalities like the poet saint, Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Jahan (1699-1780 A.D.) held the Vedas in great esteem and as "divinely inspired".¹⁶ He even made concession for idolatry as "a means of concentration on God."¹⁷ Another example is that of the orthodox-minded Shah Wali Ullah. His own son, Shah Abdul Aziz, was a great devotee of Krishna and "regarded Krishna among the 'Awlia' (saints) because of the impact *Bhagwad Geeta* made on his mind."¹⁸ Hence, there is hardly a clear line of distinction between the mystical practices and beliefs of one Sufi order and the other. Their mystical graph ranges from the many shades of orthodoxy to the many shades of liberalism, tolerance and syncretism; although a general overview would present certain orders riding a more tolerant wave than the others.

Sufis become the connecting link between central Asia and India. The prominent strand in this development is the travelling Sufi, Khwaja Chisti of the 12th century, from Afghanistan to Punjab and further to Delhi. Although many Sufi saints have travelled to India previously, yet the passionately conducted international and inter-cultural dialogue by the Chistiya silsila holds a historical place in the development of Sufism in India. It is during this temporal juncture that the great Sufi

¹⁴ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram., eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p 46.

¹⁵ Ibid. p 47.

¹⁶ Ibid. p 47.

¹⁷ Ibid. p 47.

¹⁸ Ibid. p 47.

poet Farid ud-din Shakarganj, also called Baba Farid, reaches Punjab via Afghanistan. In the twelfth century, Baba Farid, who is close to the aristocratic families in Punjab, voluntarily leads a life of an ascetic, very like the hermetic lifestyle of the Natha-yogis in India, and undergoes strict rounds of renunciation and austerities. Baba Farid is also known to have been familiar with the Chisti silila. After the Chisti silila, the most popular silila which had its place in the heart of India is the Qadiri Shattari silila. The Qadiri silila took birth in Iraq, entered India in the 15th century and gave birth to Bulleh Shah, who made a lasting impression on the masses. Sain Mia Mir (1550-1635 A.D.) holds a momentous position in the development of the Qadiri silila in Punjab. He was the chief invitee for keeping the foundation stone for the golden temple in Amritsar. This is an unparalleled and superb historical moment which becomes emblematic of the co-mutuality and reciprocity between the Sufis, the Bhakti Saints and Gurus. This great legacy makes Bulleh Shah what he stands for: inclusive sensibility, a Sufi without a creed and yet a Saint who is mesmerized as much by Krishna bhakti as by the great Sufi martyrs Mansur al-Hallaj and Sarmad. Qadiri silila reached new heights during the time period of Shah Jahan and the liberality and open-mindedness of Dara Shikoh.

Chapter two, “Historical and Socio-Cultural Background to the Emergence of Sufism in Sindh and Punjab”, dwells upon the backdrop of the history, societal and cultural milieu, which have a bearing on the Sufi poetry of the two regions under consideration. The chapter also makes an attempt to see the parallelisms in the gestalt of the emergence of Sufism in India and the prevalent devotional Bhakti tradition. It dwells upon how both like-minded contemporaneous tendencies, which retract from the official religion make space for the layman, till then relegated to the margins by the elitist ecclesiastical clergy. One reason behind this large scale appreciation of Sufi thought is their eclecticism which makes it appealing to people of different religious sentiments across the globe. There is a palpable impact of Christianity, Neo-Platonism and Buddhism. As Sufism arrives on the soil of the Indian sub-continent in the 8th century B.C., there is an irresistible impact of the Indian Vedantic thought on Sufism. It is important that the Vedantic thought does not just imply Shankaracharya. Shankaracharya lived in India in the eighth century and can be called a contemporary

of the Sufis in India. The term ‘Vedanta’ is an umbrella term which includes the *Vedas*, the *Bhagvad Geeta* and the *Brahma-Sutras* and the *Upanishads*. Their philosophical content includes three mystical modalities: ‘advaita’ (non-dualism), Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism) and ‘dvaita’ (dualism). All these varying philosophical views emerge from varied understandings of the connection between the ‘Brahma’, ‘atman’ and ‘prakriti’, meaning the absolute Supreme Reality, the individual soul and the phenomenal world. Adi Shankaracharya, the upholder of advaita (monism) in the early eighth century, focuses on the unity of the ‘atman’ and the ‘nirguna’ Brahma (without attributes). He wrote commentaries on the *Brahma Sutras*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagwad Geeta*. Shankaracharya criticized the mimamsa school of Hinduism since it was oriented towards ritualism and ridiculed monasticism. Shankaracharya, hence, posited God as pure consciousness, beyond name and form. The path to attainment of God for Shankaracharya was not worship, but philosophical discrimination (‘viveka’) and renunciation of the unreal (‘vairagya’). However, there is a twist here. Swami Nikhilananda, in the preface to English translation of Shankara’s *Atmabodh*, called ‘Self-knowledge’ explains:

...he [Shankaracharya] was aware that few aspirants are strong enough to climb this steep path. The majority require a tangible symbol of truth, anthropomorphic or otherwise, and also a human relationship with a personal God.¹⁹

Hence, even Shankaracharya devotes hymns to the service of Shiva, Vishnu and Shakti, only to make ‘advaita’ simpler and enabling for common understanding:

Shankara takes every opportunity to insist that the true essence of man and the universe is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. It is only when the individual sees a difference between Brahman and himself and the universe that he becomes a victim of fear, suffering and misery.²⁰

¹⁹ *Self-Knowledge*. Trans. Swami Nikhilananda. 1947. p xiv.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p xvi.

Non-dualistic philosophy is poised on “the divinity of the Soul, the unity of existence, the Oneness of the Godhead, and the harmony of religions.”²¹ The aforesaid description of Shankaracharya’s philosophy is equally valid for the Sufi mystics who believe in the unity of Being, ‘wahadat ul- wujud’. The ‘dvaita’ (dualistic) philosophy of Madhava considers the human soul (atman) as different from ‘Brahma’ (divine Godhead), a difference that can never be transcended. Brahma is independent. All other beings are dependent on him. Ramanuja’s Vishistadvaita (qualified non-dualism) rests on the hypothesis that there exists a difference between ‘atman’ and ‘Brahman’ and that there exists a unity of all souls. Both God and the world of matter are two different absolutes. Both the divine realm and the phenomenal world are metaphysically real and neither is understood as illusive or false. For Ramanuja, even the supreme Reality is a personal ‘saguna’ God, Vishnu, with both body and soul. Simultaneously, there is a possibility of sharing in the blissful state of God through ‘bhakti’, devotion and remembrance of God’s attributes which is perfection ridden. The existence of these varied perspectives about the relationship between the creator and his creation vouch for the liberal-minded Indian psyche which allowed co-existence of diverse philosophical and theological perspectives.

The early Sufis like Hasan Basri distance themselves from the convention bound concept of religion founded on fear of God and punishment for a deviant from the prescribed path. Krishna P. Bahadur cites from R.A.Nicholson’s *The Idea of Personality in Sufism* that when told that God can be attained only after burning in the fires of hell for a thousand years, Hasan Basri replied “I would love to be that person”.²² Abul Hassan Nuri from Khorassan (d. A.D. 907) dis-counted knowledge and reasoning in approaching God. Advocating inner purity and detachment from the world, Nuri believed in intuitive coalescence into the light of the divine Being:

I looked at His light...till I became light myself.²³

Bayazid Bistami of Khorassan (d. A.D. 874) spoke about the evanescence of consciousness at the moment of mystical union with God. The description is analogous to

²¹ *Self-Knowledge*. Trans. Swami Nikhilananda. 1947. p xviii.

²² Krishna P. Bahadur. *Sufi Mysticism*. 1999. p 70.

²³ *Ibid*. p 72.

the attainment of 'fana'. Junayad of Nehawand (d. 910 A.D.) is another prominent Sufi figure who prescribed humility and perpetual sustenance in the meditation of God:

One should live in God and die in Him.²⁴

Abu Bakr Shibli of Khorassan emphasized on the world as un-real due to the transience and evanescence of the temporal world. Hence, Sufism in its pristine form exhibited emphasis on sterling human values, piety and love of God and did so through exemplary human lives lived by its proponents. However, there arise ripples of contradiction in the spirit of Sufism exhibited by them. An oft-cited instance is that of Abu Bakr Shibli's insistence that he would get cured of his physical illness if the doctor who came to cure him converted to Islam. The story says that the latter consented, and Shibli was miraculously cured. Miracle or not, truth or not, the very gesture of the demand for proselytization defeats the spirit of Sufism. And yet there are examples of Sufis like Mansur al-Hallaj (b. 858 A.D.). With Mansur, we enter the period of Sufi philosophers and gnostics, who started articulating their direct connection with the divine Being in explicit terms, while divesting themselves of the false and illusive discourses of the phenomenal world which beleaguer mankind as an endless vortex of illusions and falsities. The discussions and debates on the distinctions between the different religious denominations are employed by the complacent and contentious clergymen, who are eager to maintain their own power position with regard to the credulous laymen. True mystics supersede such worldly discourses. The religious establishment denominates them as the Blasphemous. When Mansur al-Hallaj proclaimed '*ana 'l Haq*' ('I am Truth'), he was accused of presumption and blasphemy. Hallaj met a deplorable fate. He was mercilessly executed in 922 A.D. Looking at the panorama of Sufis, three kinds of Sufis are listed: those who approach the divine Reality with purity of heart and soul, those who approach the divine Being with strict forbearance and self-discipline, and those who try to mimic the above two through their personalized idiosyncratic pretensions:

²⁴ Krishna P. Bahadur. *Sufi Mysticism*. 1999. p 73

Hujwiri calls them, respectively, the men of union, of principles and of superfluities.²⁵

The present research focuses on “the men of union”.

Chapter three attempts a close study of Shah Abdul Latif’s life and philosophy in the matrix of the prominent Sufi poets of Sindh. Beginning with the biographical details of Latif’s childhood, love and marriage, the chapter goes on to elaborate Latif’s mystical journey which is inextricably interwoven with the folk narratives of Sindh. It is interesting to witness the saint-poet deriving mystical lessons from incidents and scenes of otherwise minuscule significance. The point upheld is that ideas are everywhere and are subject to re-iteration; what invests them with value is the emotion evoked in alliance with the conscious idea. The chapter dwells upon the poetic form of the *Risalo*; Shah Latif’s *Risalo* as a register of the contemporary socio-cultural framework; Sufism in the poetry of Latif; the path to the attainment of the divine Beloved; and the motifs in Latif’s poetry like life-in-death and death-in-life, the beautiful and the sublime aspects of nature in Latif’s poetry. The chapter also presents a panoramic view of an understanding of the way Sufism existed in Sindh via a detailed understanding of Sufi poets like Shah Inat (d. 1717 A.D.), Shah Inayat of Jhok (1656-1718 A.D.), Shah Abdul Karim (1536-1620 A.D.), Hazrat Mian Mir (1550-1635 A.D.), Qazi Qazan (d. 1551), Sachal Sarmast (1739-1827 A.D.), Dalpat, Bedil (1815-1873 A.D.) and Bekas (1859-1882 A.D.).

Chapter four titled “Bulleh Shah’s Life and Philosophy in the Matrix of the Prominent Sufi Poets of Punjab,” discusses Bulleh Shah’s life and the topical references to the social and historical events which seem to have had an indispensable repercussion on Bulleh Shah’s poetry. Predominant motifs in Bulleh Shah’s verses are discussed like dream verses reality, the attainment of ‘baikaid sensibility’, emphasis on right action or ‘karmavada’: the spinning wheel and its breaking down; knowing the un-knowable and the path of non-dualism (‘advaita’). Bulleh Shah’s mystical rendering of the folk-narratives of Punjab, his eclecticism and inclusivity endows Bulleh Shah’s poetry with perennial and universal appeal. Bulleh Shah is further discussed vis-à-vis the prominent Sufi poets of Punjab like Baba Farid, Shah Hussain (1538 c.- 1600 A.D.), Hazrat Mian

²⁵ Krishna P. Bahadur. *Sufi Mysticism*. 1999. p 79

Mir (1550-1635 A.D.), Shah Sharaf (1629-1724 A.D.), Sultan Bahu (1631-1691 AD), Ali Haider (1690-1751 A.D.), Khwaja Ghulam Farid and Waris Shah (1730-1790 A.D.).

The fifth chapter, *Parallelisms in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah*, performs a comparative study of the two poets via a close reading of their verses. In doing so, there is a simultaneous inter-textual analysis of Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah with their predecessors and contemporary Sufi poets. The chapter dwells upon the following facets of the poetic enunciations of Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah, by way of comparative thematology: the centrality of love ('ishq') in Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah; prudence verses foolishness; minimalism in discursive argumentation; the value of simplicity; the value of silence; symbolism; presence of strong women protagonists; emphasis on right action; historical interaction with the yogis of India; 'advaitwada' of Bulleh Shah and Shah Abdul Latif; the realization that the way to union with God is a lonesome journey; and the stages in the union between the human lover and the divine Beloved. The chapter brings forth how the true Sufi love for the Supreme Being is unconditional. The reward for absolute submission is absolute state of joy and bliss in the divine presence. There are no half measures in love on either side. Absolute fealty towards the divine Being is rewarded with absolute acceptance of the human soul within the fold of divine effulgence. Bulleh Shah and Shah Abdul Latif belong to that sublime group of Sufis termed by Hujwiri as "men of union"²⁶. They are men of principles, of course, but they attain divine union not through a strict rule-bound adherence to principles but through absolute submission to the divine Beloved. Rumi, a Sufi model for all times, expresses the contours of total submission hence:

Whatever instrument He makes me, that I am.

If He makes of me a cup, a cup am I;

If He makes of me a dagger, a dagger am I.

If He makes me a fountain, I pour forth water;

If He makes me fire, I give forth heat...

²⁶ Krishna P. Bahadur. *Sufi Mysticism*. 1999. p 79.

If He makes me a friend, I serve my friends.

I am as the pen in the fingers of the writer,

I am not in the position to obey or not at will.²⁷

This is the dual impulse in the Sufi spirit which percolates intense Sufi poets like Latif and Bulleh Shah. Their non-conformity from man-made ritualistic religiosity finds a more intense mystical instinct in absolute acquiescence with the will of the divine Beloved. Treading this path, they not just accept but, desire for a state of dissolution ('fana') in the will of God. Their rebellion with the human dictates and from the ecclesiastical prescriptions eventually brings them closer to the spirit and the soul of humanity at large.

The conclusion shall attempt to give a compendium of the inferences drawn from the present research and how far the questions raised at the beginning of the research, regarding the spacio-temporal and socio-historical emergence and flourishing of Sufism in Sindh and Punjab and their philosophical interaction with existing mystical currents in India, have been answered and how Sufi paradigm validates its existence in the contemporary scenario marred with self-centered secession from the common weal. The conclusion sums up the research with an over-arching understanding of the select Sufi poets and their philosophical take on the hermeneutics of human life, and posits inferences drawn from a comparative thematic study of Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah, derived from back and forth inter-textual references to the Sufi and the Indian mystical trends.

²⁷ *The Masnavi: the Spiritual Couplets of Maulana Jalalu'd-din Muhammad Rumi.* Trans. E.H. Whinfield. 1898. pp 242-243.

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING SUFISM

1.1 What is Sufism

1.1.1 Defining Sufism

James Fadiman in *Essential Sufism* defines Sufism hence:

Sufism is often described as a path, suggesting both an origin and a destination. The aim of Sufism is the elimination of all veils between the individual and God. Traveling this path, one can acquire knowledge of Reality. God is the ultimate reality, not this phenomenal world of multiplicity.¹

This pithy description enables an understanding of Sufism as a concept, a beginning and a way of life which culminates in the attainment of the divine Beloved through the teleological path of uplifting the veils or hindrances pertaining to the empirical world which separate human being from his divine source. The ultimate knowledge of the Supreme Being is the knowledge of 'Reality'. A central aspect of the Sufi in its incipient stage was "non-conformity"² with regard to the religious staunchness and schismatic doctrines and dogmas. This non-conformity with established orthodoxy aims at harmony with the entire universe. Khan and S.Ram lay emphasis on the role played by the energy generated by non-conformity. In the words of Rabindra Nath Tagore:

"They come with their laws and their codes to bind me fast; but I evade them ever, for I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands."³

In Sufi paradigm, love or 'ishq' for the divine Beloved is an anathema to all schismatic voices and to the cacophony, friction or discord present between the inner

¹ James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds. *Essential Sufism*. 1997. p 1.

² Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. vol 2. 2003. p 16.

³ Ibid. p16.

and the outer world. Love acts as an antidote to the inner fidgetiness and psychological unrest. The finale of this love is its culmination in ‘fana’ (losing one’s ‘wujud’ in the ‘wahadat’, complete submission and surrender to God, the divine Beloved) and ‘baqa’ (life-eternal in union with the divinity of the Supreme Being). Just as Sufism as a term cannot have a definitive and absolute description, similarly, there is no fixed path for the Sufi aspirant. We come across the following statements in the second volume of *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*: “The ways unto God are as the number of the breaths of the sons of Man.”⁴ Khan and S. Ram cite another Sufi who qualifies the fluid nature of the path to the attainment of the divine Being:

“Have you ever travelled by a tram? If you have, then you know that each passenger carries a ticket, which is non-transferable. No one can travel on another’s ticket. Such is the journey of the seeker after Truth.”⁵

This is followed by another citation:

“Who showed the path to Majnun? Who showed the path to Leila? Love, then, follow love”.⁶

These are some of those simplistic, and yet not so easy, pathways prescribed in the Sufi idiom, which lead to the attainment of the Supreme Reality. Further, in an attempt to chart the Sufi path, there is a great significance attached with ‘introspection’ and ‘silence’. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram attach a great value to ‘silence’ as a tool in the realization of the spiritual path. They cite a great Sufi poet from Sindh, Darya Khan, hence: ““Out of the silence comes the voice””.⁷ Truth and the Supreme Reality are envisioned, nurtured and realized in the silence of the heart.

Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram explain the term “the Great Silence”, as being capacitated to distance the seeker away from the superficial world of the senses:

...the great silence is not a vacuity; it is full of harmonies
and hues, of visions and whispers; that the sky is full of

⁴ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. vol 2. 2003. p 20

⁵ Ibid. p 20.

⁶ Ibid. p 20.

⁷ Ibid. p 20.

invitations issued by God; and these invitations are being wafted by the wind and that when the individual receives his invitation, his soul is awakened from her sleep of self-sufficiency and she sets out on her journey to the home of the Beloved, whom she had forgotten while staying in the city of the senses.⁸

Here, two kinds of binaries are created: silence as ‘vacuity’ verses silence as ‘fullness’ and the realm of ‘sleep of self-sufficiency’ in the city of senses verses the realm of ‘wakefulness’ in an ardent search for the divine Beloved. Interestingly, ‘silence’ is dealt with in the verses of many prominent Sufis. Silence, in ordinary understanding of the word would be associated with vacuity, something which connotes a lack, a blank and a void. But in Sufi parlance, it is idiomatic that the normative and the commonplace import of words undergoes a complete transformation, so much so that a word connotes its own antonym. It is indeed a topsy-turvy world where words and categories lose their commonly accepted meanings. Hence, ‘silence’ does not mean a lack or an absence; instead silence provides an opportunity to transcend to a higher state of fullness. Further, it is the sensory perceptions that give us a sense of awareness and consciousness about our existence, but in Sufi paradigm, senses are hampering and obstructive in taking cognizance of our divine connection. Bulleh Shah moves a step further. He attains a state where all discursive dichotomies collapse and the saint poet says that he is neither in a state of sleep, nor in a state of wakefulness, “*naa jaagadn naa saudn*”⁹. In an absolute ‘advaitic’ (non-dualistic) stance, the saint-poet goes beyond all defining worldly binaries because he feels that the divine Beloved is not to be defined by reductive and restrictive categories of human knowledge and understanding.

1.1.2 Technical terms in Sufi paradigm

Many of the significant technical terms and phrases of Sufism are explained by Al Hujwiri in the fourteenth chapter of *The Kashf Al-Mahjub (The Revelation of the Veiled)*. Hujwiri presents ‘*waqt*’ as the present time of a Sufi aspirant, so that the seeker after divine Reality lives in the present moment with complete obliviousness of

⁸ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. vol 2. p 21

⁹ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 80.

what is past and what is to happen in the future. Says Hujwiri:

... the world becomes a hell to the possessor of waqt, because he is contemplating absence (*'ghaybat'*) and his heart is distressed by the loss of his beloved; and sometimes his heart is like a paradise in the blessedness of contemplation, and every moment brings to him a gift and a glad message from God.¹⁰

However, the feeling of perfect happiness with God in the present moment is accompanied with a state or *'hal'* of actual vision (*'iyan'*)¹¹. This state is bestowed upon the seeker by the divine presence. *'Waqt'* is the condition of the seeker free of the anxieties and constraints of past and future, and desirous of entering into the state or *'hal'* of direct presence of God:

Waqt has need of *'hal'*, for *'waqt'* is beautified by *'hal'* and subsists thereby.¹²

"To ask about *'hal'* is absurd" because *'hal'* is the annihilation of speech (*'maqal'*)¹³

Bulleh Shah and Shah Abdul Latif advocate 'silence' as it provides a more feasible condition for introspection and also because silence annuls the thought processes beleaguered by worldly discourses.

Hujwiri in *Kashf Al- Mahjub* discusses two parallel terms: *'Wajd'* and *'Wujud'*. These terms are applicable to human response to audition or *'sama'*. *'Wajd'* implies grief due to loss of the Beloved and failure in attaining the Beloved. *'Wujud'* implies the thrill in the attainment of the divine Beloved. The former involves intense desire for the Beloved and ardent seeking. The latter involves basking in the presence of the divine Beloved. Another set of technical terms in Sufi paradigm are *'uns'* (intimacy) and *'haybat'* (awe). When man feels overwhelmed by the majesty (*'jalal'*) and the splendour of God, the sense of awe (*'haybat'*) brings with it a feeling of subservience, anxiety and distress. Whereas, when the seeker feels the sense of God's beauty

¹⁰ Ali Ibn Usman Al-Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982. p 370.

¹¹ Ibid. p 370.

¹² Ibid. p 369.

¹³ Ibid. p 370

(‘*jamal*’), the seeker rejoices in the sense of intimacy (‘*uns*’) with the divine Being.¹⁴ The awe-inspiring aspect of God’s majesty leads to estrangement (‘*beganagi*’) from Him, while the intimacy with the divine Being leads to oneness (‘*yaganagi*’).¹⁵

The divine Being is called ‘*huviyat*’, i.e., essence or absolute being, and manifests himself in all existences and under all conditions.

The Lord of Unity is the grand origin of Multiplicity of
names and attributes.¹⁶

The concept is very similar to what we come across in verse 8, chapter 8 of *The Bhagwad Gita*:

All the various forms exist in the imagination of the
perceiver, the substratum being the eternal and
all-pervading Vishnu, whose nature is Existence and
Intelligence. Names and forms are like bangles and
bracelets and Vishnu is like gold.¹⁷

The Sufis consider the soul of man a particle of divine breath or spirit. They consider it immortal and immaterial, and attribute to it the two qualities: “eternity without beginning and eternity without end”.¹⁸ The term ‘Qadim’, in Sufi parlance, is used to denote God. It means: “anterior to existence, i.e. it always was, and its being was anterior to all beings”.¹⁹ God is also given the attributes like ‘Azal’ and ‘Abad’. ‘Azal’

¹⁴ Ali Ibn Usman Al-Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982.. p 376

¹⁵ Ibid. p 377.

¹⁶ Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani. *The Religion and Poetry of Shah Latif: The Greatest Poet of Sind*. 1889. p 35.

¹⁷ *The Bhagwad Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nikhilananda. 1947. p164. The Sanskrit text from reads:

सच्चिदात्मन्यनुस्यूते नित्ये विष्णौ ।

0; Dr; ks fofo/KLI okZ gkVo dVclknokrAA

The translator explains that “all things in the phenomenal world are endowed with five characteristics: existence, cognizability (that which makes a person aware of the existence of a thing), attraction, form and name. Of these, the first three belonging to ‘sat’, ‘chit’ and ‘ananda’ (existence, knowledge and bliss) belong to Brahman, which is the basis of everything and the other two, to the relative world. The characteristics of ‘existence’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘bliss’ are equally present in all material elements, animals, man, angels and Gods. These constitute their unchanging basis. It is the illusory name and form that makes one thing appear different from the other.” (*The Bhagwad Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nikhilananda. 1947. p165)

¹⁸ Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani. *The Religion and Poetry of Shah Latif: The Greatest Poet of Sind*. 1889. p 37.

¹⁹ Ali Ibn Usman Al-Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982. p 386.

means “that which has no beginning”.²⁰ ‘Abad’ means “that which has no end”.²¹ For Sufi mystics like Mansur al-Hallaj and Al- Ghazali, human being partakes of these quintessential abiding qualities of the Supreme Being.

Three similar sounding terms in the Sufi context deserve mention here: ‘tahalli’, ‘tajalli’ and ‘takhalli’. ‘Tahalli’ is the “imitation of praiseworthy people in word and deed.”²² It is a commendable exercise, but ostentation of the same is a punishable offence. ‘Tajalli’, according to Hujwiri, is “the blessed secret of Divine illumination in the hearts of the blest, whereby they are made capable of seeing God with their hearts.”²³ ‘Takhalli’ implies a “turning away from distractions which prevent a man from attaining God”.²⁴ These distractions include the attraction which the empirical, scintillating, world holds for a spiritual seeker, be it the desire for a safe heavenly abode in the after-life or an abiding association with human bonding and worldly existence. All of these need to be renounced on the path to the attainment of God.

Another concept central to Sufi understanding of the relationship between the human and the divine realm is that of emanation and immanence. Relation between the creator (‘rab’) and the created (‘abd’) and the relationship between ‘Dhat’ (essence of the Supreme Being) and ‘Sifat’ (His attributes) is understood by the Sufis either in terms of emanation or of immanence. Emanation is a process whereby the divine Being manifests Himself in the world. This manifestation of the glory of God is termed as ‘tajalli’.²⁵ The theory of emanation holds the following principle:

All originates from Him and that all should ultimately
be absorbed in Him.²⁶

Endorsing the same idea, Shams Tabriz holds the view:

Union with the divine Being implies an understanding
that everything belongs to Him, emanates from Him,
and will ultimately merge in Him. Whatever exists

²⁰ Ali Ibn Usman Al-Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982. p 386.

²¹ Ibid. p 386.

²² Ibid. p 389.

²³ Ibid. p 389.

²⁴ Ibid. p 389.

²⁵ Ibid. p 275.

²⁶ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. vol 1. 2003. p 39.

between the firmament and earth belongs to Him.

²⁷(Translation mine)

Emanation presents a theory of descent or ‘tanazzulat’. In Sufi paradigm, God’s quintessence is ‘al Ama’, devoid of all relations and qualities. It is easy to understand this concept as parallel to the Hindu concept of a ‘nirguna’ Brahma. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram explain the Vedic concept of ‘nirguna’ God from *Svetasvatra Upanishad*:

The one God hidden in all things.

All-prevailing, the inner soul of things.

The over-seer of deeds (karman) in all things abiding.²⁸

This God is un-definable, limitless, un-circumscribed by human mode of thinking. Yet, he is the supreme force who pervades all living things and watches over human deeds, virtue and vice. This God radiates divine benediction and divine effulgence by manifesting in all created beings of the universe, animal as well as vegetative. This process of individualization happens through what Sufis call His descent or ‘tanazzulat’. God remains hidden behind the veil, unknown and unknowable in the state of transcendence. However, God’s descent and revelation in varied manifestations and configurations is a necessary step in human understanding of the divine essence or attaining close proximity with Him. The worldly manifestations (‘khalq’) of the single divine essence (‘Haqq’) camouflage the latter and the uplifting of this veil is the vocation of the Sufi. Both ‘Haqq’ (Truth) and ‘Khalq’ (Universe) are complementary. ‘Haqq’ manifests and extends itself in ‘Khalq’. ‘Khalq’, in its multiplicity and individualization is a reminder of ‘Haqq’, the essence of truth behind the veil of individualization and manifestation.

1.1.3 Steps in the Spiritual progress in Sufi parlance.

The stations or ‘maqamat’ through which a mystic has to pass are enumerated by Shaikh Shihab-ud-din Suhrawardi hence: ‘*Tauba*’ (‘repentance’), ‘*Wara*’

²⁷ Farida Mailiki. *Shams Tabrizi: Rumi Ke Kaamil Murshid*. 2014. p 157. The Hindi version reads:
 ijekRek l s, d: i rk dk vFiz gS bl ckr dks l e>uk fd l Ck dN ijekRek
 dk gS ml h l s vk; k gS vlg ml h eaoki l l ek tkrk gA vkdk' k ?kjr h vlg
 bu nkuha ds Ckhp tks dN gS og ijekRek dk gS A

²⁸ Masood Ali Khan and S.Ram. eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. vol 1. 2003. p 232.

(‘abstinence’), ‘Zuhd’ (‘piety’), ‘Faqr’ (poverty), ‘Sabr’ (patience), ‘Shukr’ (gratitude), ‘Khauf’ (fear), ‘Raza’ (hope), ‘Tawakkul’ (‘contentment’), ‘Riza’ (‘submission to the divine will’).²⁹

As cited by Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani, the author of the Persian text *Dabistan Mazahib* enumerates seven degrees in the spiritual development of a Sufi:

- (i) penitence, obedience and prayer
- (ii) purity of the spirit from Satanic qualities
- (iii) manifestation of the heart by laudable qualities
- (iv) application of the constitution to nothing else but God
- (v) extreme heavenly dominion
- (vi) realizing the realm of divine power
- (vii) attainment of 'fana', i.e., annihilation and 'baqa', i.e., eternal life.

The concepts of 'fana' and 'baqa' are closely connected to each other:

Fana is the absorption in God, non-existence, or effacement of the imaginary with true Being, like the loss of a drop of water in the ocean. *Baqa* or eternal life is the union of the drop with the sea.³⁰

‘Fana’ and ‘Baqa’ are two different psychological states: in the former, the seeker undergoes loss of his separate subjective identity; in the latter, the seeker gains a sense of fulfilment in eternal life in communion with the divine Being. According to Hujwiri, in a state of ‘fana’, the seeker is capacitated to attain strict forbearance by killing one’s lower desires or ‘nafs’, in Sufi terminology. In the state of ‘baqa’, the seeker loses all sense of distinction between “life and death, love and enmity, unity

²⁹ Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. “Muslim Mystic Ideology and Contribution to Indian Culture”. *Sufism and Society in Medieval India*. Ed. Raziuddin Aquil. 2010. p 2.

³⁰ Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani. *The Religion and Poetry of Shah Latif: The Greatest Poet of Sind*. 1889. p 41.

and diversity.”³¹ Khan and S. Ram explain:

Renunciation of all worldly attachments is ‘fana’ and being in the presence of Divinity and Its Light is ‘baqa’, in which state a Sufi forgets all about himself and the world, and his tongue and word become the tongue and word of God.³²

‘Fana’ is the realization of the cessation of the individual consciousness as separate from the divine Being.

As for the first three characteristics given in *Dabistan Mazahib*, they include the purification of the self from negative and retrograde tendencies which are a hindrance for the aspirant in his tryst to attain the divine Beloved. These negatives include the control of ‘nafs’ (‘the appetitive soul’), ‘ruh’ (‘the spirit’), ‘qalb’ (‘the heart’), and ‘aql’ (‘intelligence’) and a restraint of one’s inordinate desires and negative tendencies, which enthrall the individual to his own individual centripetal self-centeredness. Steps four, five and six relate to the realization very similar to Arjuna after witnessing the ‘virat-rupa’ or the cosmic form’ of Lord Krishna, with innumerable life-forms emanating from God’s unlimited universal form and unnumbered life forms finally getting solace in the merger with the divine force, the one cosmic principal, the cause of all living forms, their genesis as well as dissolution:

You are the original personality of Godhead, the oldest, the ultimate sanctuary of this manifested cosmic world. You are the knower of everything, and you are all that is knowable. You are the refuge, above the material modes. O Limitless form! This whole cosmic manifestation is pervaded by you.³³

³¹ Masood Ali Khan and S.Ram. eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. vol 1. 2003. p 33.

³² Ibid. p 33.

³³ *The Bhagwad Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nikhilananda. Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1947. p 12.

The Sanskrit text reads:

Roekfnnd% i #“% igk.k&Lroel; fo'ol; ij fu/kueA

वेत्तासि वेद्यं च परं च धाम त्वया तत् विश्वमनन्तरूपम्॥

You (‘tvam’) are the original Supreme God (‘Adi devah’). You are the transcendental (‘param’) refuge (‘nidhaanam’) of this (‘asya’) universe (‘visvasya’). You are (‘asi’) the knower (‘vetta’) and all that is knowable (‘vedyam’). The entire universe is pervaded by you, O! limitless form.

Ali Uthman Al- Hujwiri in his treatise on Sufism, *Kashf Al Mahjub*, translated by R.A.Nicholson as *The Revelation of the Veiled*, elaborately discusses the uncovering of the eleven veils on the path of realization of God. As per Hujwiri, the first veil concerns “the gnosis of God (‘*marifat*’)”³⁴. Here the author discusses two kinds of ‘gnosis’: one, cognitional or ‘*ilmi*’; two, emotional or ‘*hali*’ and places the second as more authentic and closer to the heart. Cognitional knowledge fulfils the demands of Shariat or the law. Emotional gnosis approximates closer to the attainment of ‘*haqiqat*’. However, Hujwiri posits emotional gnosis with greater value, without completely relegating cognitional gnosis to the periphery. A gnostic feels attached only to God and detaches himself from everything else in the universe. Remarks Hujwiri:

The real gist of gnosis is to recognize that to God is the kingdom. When a man knows that all possessions are in control of God, what other business has he with mankind, that he should be veiled from God by them or himself? All such veils are a result of ignorance.³⁵

The second veil to be uncovered concerns ‘Unification’ (‘*tawhid*’). Here, the seeker arrives at the acceptance that there is nothing except ‘Him’. No phenomenality, no ‘real’ existence other than the Supreme Godhead, “annihilation of separation (‘*tafrid*’)”³⁶, an understanding of unity (‘*wahdaniyyat*’) which denies the existence of anything disparate from God. In such a state, human entity loses his will and discretion and submits himself to the call of the divine. Sufi scholars like Abu Bakr and Shibli discuss the discrepancy in imbibing the ‘*tawhid*’ through an act of human agency. In the realization of ‘unification’, the active human agency becomes a hindrance and implies separation from the divine force. The actual realization of unification happens in a moment of absolute submission to God’s diktats and in a state of being overwhelmed by divine majesty. Cites Hujwiri: ‘Shibli says: “Unification veils the Unitarian from the beauty of Oneness.”’³⁷ Hence, unification does not involve an act of human will. The latter is a veil, a hindrance to be overcome through

³⁴ Ali Ibn Usman Al-Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982. p 267.

³⁵ Ibid. p 174.

³⁶ Ibid. p 281.

³⁷ Ibid. p 284.

complete submission and resignation to Him. In this state, says Hujwiri, “unitarian, unification and the One become all three causes of the existence of one another.”³⁸ The description resonates the state of ultimate union between Shah Abdul Latif’s female protagonist and her divine beloved, which culminates in a merger between the seeker and the sought, the human and the divine. Sohini’s submission to the current of the formidable river makes up for coalescence between the two. She flows into an infinite unity, which abrogates all dichotomies, into a unified harmonious whole. This is the state where the “Gyanam gyeyyam tatha gyaata”³⁹, “knowledge, knower and knowable merge into a single unified whole”.

The third veil concerns “faith (*‘iman’*).”⁴⁰ This is an essential pre-requisite for positing all hope in the divine force, while understanding all material accoutrements as super-regoratory. Fourth veil involves “purification from foulness.”⁴¹ It implies overcoming a state of heedlessness towards the divine springs of human life. The fifth veil concerns “prayer” whose central tenet is, not fear of divine nemesis but, love (*‘mahabbat’*) for the divine Beloved. The sixth veil involves charity and liberality. Seventh veil concerns ‘fasting’, the eighth veil concerns ‘pilgrimage’, the ninth veil concerns ‘companionship’, the tenth veil concerns understanding the technical phraseology of Sufism. The eleventh veil discusses audition (*‘sama’*). Hujwiri explains that knowledge can be gained through the five senses bestowed upon mankind: sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell. Audition of religious texts and prayers are commendable since this grants meaning and purpose to the sense of hearing. However, dancing (*‘raqs’*) is disapproved by many early Sufi scholars as a improper to the solemnity of the mystical atmosphere:

You must know that dancing (raqs) has no foundation either in the religious law (of Islam) or in the path (of Sufism), because all reasonable men agree that it is a diversion when it is in earnest, and an impropriety (laghwi) when it is in jest.⁴²

Hujwiri is completely against ‘dancing’ per se as a religious exercise. As a

³⁸ Ali Ibn Usman Al-Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982. p 267.

³⁹ *Ashtavakra Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nityaswarupananda. 1953. p 26.

⁴⁰ Ali Ibn Usman Al Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982. p 286.

⁴¹ Ibid. p 291

⁴² Ibid. p 416.

consciously conducted “foot-play”, it is condemned as a frivolous activity,

but when the heart throbs with exhilaration and rapture becomes intense and the agitation of ecstasy is manifested and conventional forms are gone, that agitation (*idtirab*) is neither dancing nor foot-play nor bodily indulgence, but a dissolution of the soul.⁴³

Hence, ‘sama’, which involves spiritual chanting and whirling bodily movements, is approved only if un-selfconscious and spontaneous. Hujwiri disapproves of ‘sama’ as a conscious or artificial act of performance.

The four states through which a Sufi aspirant is commonly understood to pass are: ‘Shariat’, ‘Tarikat’, ‘Marfat’, ‘Hakikat’. R.A.Nicholson describes ‘ilm’ as pertaining to ordinary knowledge whereas “direct knowledge of God based on revelation or apocalyptic vision”⁴⁴ as belonging to ‘marifat’. Gnosis also takes the seeker into the realm of ecstasy, loss of body consciousness and being possessed by divine rapture. Nicholson cites the example of a tenth century wandering dervish who places God’s “exoteric revelation” as secondary to His “esoteric revelation”.⁴⁵ explains Nicholson,

This means that the gnostic need not be dismayed if his inner experience conflicts with the religious law. The contradiction is only apparent. Religion addresses itself to the common herd of men who are veiled by their minds, by logic, tradition, and so on; whereas gnosis belongs to the elect, whose bodies and spirits are bathed in the eternal Light.⁴⁶

In the state of 'shariat', human being, as a traveller on the path to divinity, follows the principles of religion or 'sharaa', and operates within the realm of the phenomenal world. In a state of 'Tarikat', the traveller becomes more of a 'fakir' or a recluse than a person of strict religious observance. James Fadiman explains: "Just as shariah refers to the external dimension of religion, the tariqah refers to the inner practices of

⁴³ Ali Ibn Usman Al Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982. p 416.

⁴⁴ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mysticism of Islam*. Kindle ed. 2010. N.Pag.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Sufism...the shariah makes the outer day-to-day life clean and attractive. The tariqah is designed to make the inner life clean and pure. Each supports the other"⁴⁷. In the next stage called 'marfat', man comes to know the Real Being and he enters the realm of the world of divine power, 'Jabrut'. In the final stage called 'hakikat', human being gets completely engrossed with the Real Being and is placed in the station of 'Lahut', the world of the Real Being. While certain researchers place 'haqiqat' as the culmination of the Sufi mysticism and 'marfat' as the penultimate stage, others do the vice versa. For instance, James Fadiman calls marifah or gnosis, the fourth stage in the Sufi's spiritual journey: "fourth is marifah, or Gnosis. Gnosis is superior wisdom or knowledge of spiritual truth. This is a deep level of inner knowing, beyond haqiqah. More than momentary spiritual experience, marifah refers to an on-going state of attunement with God and with truth".⁴⁸ Shah Abdul Karim, the great grand father of Shah Abdul Latif explains these four stages, as adduced by Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani, through the behavioural pattern and thought process of human beings positioned in these four distinct stages. A person positioned in the first stage called 'shariat' says: "kill the enemy before his giving injury"; man of 'tarikah' says: "kill the enemy after his giving injury"; the man of 'hakikat' reacts as follows: "give up (pardon) the enemy after his giving injury"; men of 'Marfat' maintain: "do good to the enemy after his giving injury".⁴⁹

1.1.4 Concept of love

The concept of love or 'ishq', for the Sufi, is not confined to a person or object. The Sufi loves indiscriminately. He sees a trace of divinity in every iota of the visible world. Extending the feeling of love and compassion towards all, the Sufi feels a sense of identity with everything around. There is an evanescence of friction. Love for God's creation and for the creator himself leads to complete sense of harmony and peace, inside as well as outside. The law of reciprocity of love is valid for a Sufi as well. The lover automatically receives love from the object of love. It reminds of Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode":

⁴⁷ James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds. *Essential Sufism*. 1997. p 12.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p 13.

⁴⁹ Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani. *The Religion and Poetry of Shah Latif: The Greatest Poet of Sind*. 1889. p 49.

O Lady! We receive but what we give,
 And in our life alone does nature live,
 Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!⁵⁰

The path of love entails liquidation of the ego. The only hinderance in the path of love is the crystallization of ego. Moosa Raza elucidates the point with a quotation from the seventeenth century Persian poet Saib Tabrizi:

Neest shu hastiyat az vay rasad
Ta tu hasti dar tu kay rasad
Ta nagardi mahv-i khwaari u fanaa
Kay rasad isbaaat az uzz-u baqa

Become nothing so that your being may come from Him; as long as you exist, how can real existence come to you? As long as you are not absorbed, obliterated and annihilated, how can affirmation ever be granted you by the Almighty and the Eternal?⁵¹

1.1.5 Concept of Death

Religious discourses describe death as a strong reminder of the evanescence of human life, its transitory and fleeting character and hence aptly admonishes humans to desist from unprincipled conduct, from debauchery, cheating and merciless, hurtful and unkindly behaviour. Al- Ghazzali inscribes an intense clarity about the meaning of a life led with immense self-consciousness of death as indispensable to human beings:

Remember your contemporaries who have passed away, and were of your age.

Remember the honors and fame they earned, the high posts they held and the beautiful bodies they possessed, and today all of them are turned to dust. How they have left orphans and widows behind them. No sign of them is left today, and they lie in the dark holes underneath the earth.

⁵⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge. "Dejection: An Ode". web. 12 Dec. 2018 <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43973/dejection-an-ode>>

⁵¹ Moosa Raza. *In Search of Oneness*. 2012. pp164-165.

Picture their faces before your mind's eye and ponder. Do not fix hopes on your wealth and do not laugh away life. Remember how they walked and now all their joints lie separated and the tongue with which they talked lightly is eaten away by the worms and their teeth corroded.⁵²

The portrayal of the unsparing aspect of death is meant to be a deterrent to uncomely and unprincipled human conduct. Idries Shah cites Omar Khayyam from Swami Govinda Tirtha's 1941 book titled *The Nectar of Grace*, an analysis and translation of Omar Khayyam:

You are not gold, ignorantly heedless one:
That, once put in the earth, anyone
Will bring you out again.⁵³

Omar Khayyam wants to bring forth the puny and pathetic condition of man full of pride and self-esteem at one's physical beauty and material accomplishments. Elsewhere Ghazli remarks:

You possess only whatever will not be lost in a shipwreck.⁵⁴

At the other end, there is Jalaluddin Rumi, who dispenses all anxieties about death by expressing his belief in the transmigration of the soul. The soul being in constant search for its divine springs, re-orientes itself towards its divine font and is bound to attain the same, provided it intends to attain union with the divine Beloved:

I have again and again grown like grass;
I have experienced seven hundred and seventy moulds.
I died from minerality and became vegetable;
And from vegetativeness I died and became animal,
I died from animality and became man.
Then why fear disappearance through death?
Next time I shall die

⁵² James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds. *Essential Sufism*. 1997. pp 28-29.

⁵³ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 60.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p 57

Bringing forth wings and feathers like angels:

After that soaring higher than angel—

What you cannot imagine. I shall be that.⁵⁵

For the same reason, Omar Khayyam writes:

Take some substance from Here to There—

You will make no substance if you go with empty hand.⁵⁶

Al Ghazali has struck the nail right in the head. Shakaracharya's " Bhaj Govindam" emphatically registers a similar sentiment:

angam galitam palitam mundam

dasanaviheenam jaatam tundam

vridhdho yaati griheetwa dandam

tadapi na munchatyaashaapindam

Strength has left the old man's body; his head has become bald, his gums toothless and leaning on crutches. Even then the attachment to worldly concerns is strong and he clings firmly to fruitless desires.⁵⁷

And Kabir says in his own style:

Human life is like a water-bubble

It will vanish like the morning star.⁵⁸ (Translation mine)

Whereas to the layman death is a mere deterrent against immoral and impious conduct, the Sufis stand apart from the commonplace in their attitude of embracing, often

⁵⁵ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968.p 107.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p 60.

⁵⁷ Adi Shankaracharya. "Bhaj Govindam". Web. 16 June 2018 <https://sanskritdocuments.org/doc_vishhnu/bhajagovindam.pdf>

⁵⁸ Says Kabir:

पानी केरा बुदबुदा, अस मानस की जात।

देखत ही छिप जायेगा, ज्यों सारा परभात।।

मानव जीवन पानी के बुलबुले के समान है जो थोड़े ही समय में नष्ट हो जाता है ठीक उसी प्रकार जिस प्रकार सवेरा होने पर प्रकाश के कारण आकाश में टिमटिमाते तारे छिप जाते हैं।

"Kabir ke Dohe". Web. 20 Jan. 2019 <<https://www.hindivarta.com/pani- kera-budbuda-as-manas-ki-jaat/>>

beckoning, death as the gateway to the 'wisaal' or union with their beloved Lord. Huston Smith aptly puts it in the foreword to *Essential Sufism*:

The Sufis are the mystics of Islam. Every upright Muslim expects to see God after death, but the Sufis are the impatient ones. They want God now-- moment by moment, day by day, in this life.⁵⁹

For the mystics with firm faith in God, self- annihilation or disembarking the plank of egotism and absolute submission to the will of the Supreme mover of the world is essential to a state of union with Him. This stage is reached through constant practice at self-effacement and through selfless dedication of all of ones deeds to God. Right action, piety and love of all life forms are an essential concomitant of such a person. But those who get hardened in selfishness and abide in sin find it impossible to take the road to self- annihilation. Writes Saadi of Shiraz:

Green wood can be bent;
When it is dry, it is only straightened by fire.⁶⁰

Control of desires and inordinate emotions like anger and lust is essential to climb the mystic ladder. It is essential to reach a stage of equipoise termed as 'sthitaprajna' in the *Bhagwad Gita*:

*Prajahati yad kaman sarvan partha mano -gatn
Atmany evatmana tustah sthita--prajnas tadocyate.*
When a man abandons all desires of the heart and when his spirit is content in itself, then is he called sthitaprajna, stable in wisdom.⁶¹

In this state of psychological poise and inner contentment, there is no desire for worldly honours and self- veneration. He is not affected by affront or derision. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram cite Hazrat Sheikh Ali Hujwiri, hence:

⁵⁹ James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds. *Essential Sufism*. 1997. p ix.

⁶⁰ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 85.

⁶¹ Moosa Raza. *In Search of Oneness*. 2012. p 72.

“insult or ridicule of the friends of God is their relishing food”. A true Sufi relishes all ridicule and takes no notice of any insult done to him.⁶²

One practicing detachment from worldliness is capable of action unaffected by fear, anger or euphoria in a state of pleasure. Prophet Mohammad used the word 'halim' for such a superior man of settled consciousness. He maintains equanimity and tranquillity even in the face of fortuitous circumstances. Such a person lives in the world, but is not of it. He expects nothing from his work and remains poised in action, yet detached from its fruits. Rumi emphasises committed action and to eschew inertness and slumbering inaction, but without focusing on its results:

*Koshish-e behooda bih az khuftagi
Een dareen rah mitraash o mikhraash
Taa dam-e aakhir dami farigh mubaash*

It is better to strive even vainly, than to sleep; this way remain struggling, striving until thy last breath, do not be idle for a moment.⁶³

Lord Krishna advocates 'nishkama karma' in The Bhagwad Gita'. Rabia of Basri substantiates the same principle in her oft-quoted lines:

O God! If I adore you out of fear of hell, burn me in Hell. If I adore you out of desire for Paradise, lock me out of Paradise. But if I adore you for yourself alone, do not deny me the vision of your eternal beauty.⁶⁴

The glimpse of eternity is reserved for the pure, the one without attachment to worldliness. The reason is established well by Shah Abdul Latif in the *Risalo*. The concept is reminiscent of the vedantic concept of concurrence between 'mati' (situation of the mind at the moment of the death of human being) and 'gati' (final destiny of the soul) and the following quote from Ashtavakra Geeta is pertinent here:

One who considers oneself free is free indeed and one who considers oneself bound remains bound. "As one thinks so one becomes", is a popular saying in this

⁶² Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol1. 2003. P 26.

⁶³ Moosa Raza. *In Search of Oneness*. 2012. p 98.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p 92.

world, which is so true.⁶⁵

This is an anthropocentric worldview endorsed by Indian Vedantic thought and cogently substantiated by Shah Abdul Latif.⁶⁶ It is interesting that this world-view coheres with the one propounded by English Renaissance philosopher Pico della Mirandola. Whether Pico della Mirandola in the Renaissance period of English literature had read *AshtavakraGeeta* is a tough question, yet the former's "Oration on the Dignity of Man" presents an exact parallel to Ashtavakra's thought. Writes Pico:

Oh wondrous and unsurpassable felicity of man, to whom it is granted to have what he chooses, to be what he wills to be!⁶⁷

The concept of the great chain of Being, in the Renaissance period, which positions human being between god and beasts, allows for ascent towards the divine realm or degeneration towards the bestial state through human action:

...upon man, at the moment of his creation, God bestowed seeds pregnant with all possibilities, the germs of every form of life. Whichever of these a man shall cultivate, the same will mature and bear fruit in him. If vegetative, he will become a plant; if sensual, he will become brutish; if rational, he will reveal himself a heavenly being; if intellectual, he will be an angel and the son of God. And if, dissatisfied with the lot of all creatures, he should recollect himself into the centre of his own unity, he will there, become one spirit with God, in the solitary darkness of the Father, Who is set above all things, himself transcends all creatures.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Ashtavakra Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nityaswarupananda. 1953. p 9.

⁶⁶ The tenth century wandering dervish, Niffari, discussed in detail by R.A. Nicholson, is in concord with Latif and the vedantic mystical view. I quote from Niffari:

“And He said to me, ‘I deceive thee if I direct thee to aught save myself’”

“And He said to me, ‘If thou perishest for the sake of other than Me, thou wilt belong to that for which thou hast perished’.

(Nicholson, *Sufism: The Mysticism of Islam*)

⁶⁷ Mirandola, Pico della. “Oration on the Dignity of Man”. Web. 21 Dec. 2018. <http://www.andallthat.co.uk/uploads/2/3/8/9/2389220/pico_-_oration_on_the_dignity_of_man.pdf>

⁶⁸ Ibid.

1.2 Role of Cross cultural interaction in the development of Sufism

Mansur al-Hallaj born in 858 A.D. is another eminent Sufi figure. Persian in ancestry, Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram inform that his father was a convert from zoroastrianism to Islam. Hallaj became disciple of several Sufi teachers in succession like "Tustari, Junayd and Amr Makki"⁶⁹ with all of whom he finally broke. S. Ram also traces Hallaj's geographical itinerary through "Khurasan, Ahwaz, Persia, India and Turkistan"⁷⁰. This definitely made deep repercussion on his psychological journey in his desire to attain the truth of human existence. His indomitable fortitude and single-minded pursuit of truth (Haqq) earned him fame as well as notoriety as "a dangerous intriguer, a Christian, a rank blasphemer, a charlatan and a martyred saint".⁷¹ Having proclaimed 'ana'l haqq', 'I am Truth', he was charged with presumption and blasphemy. Nothing could deter him and Hallaj met his final fate hence:

In the year A.D. 922 after eight years imprisonment, he was scourged, mutilated, hung on a gibbet, and finally beheaded and burned.⁷²

Hallaj extols Jesus to a sublime position, which suggests his being influenced by Christian theology. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram cite Hallaj's eulogy of Christ hence:

Praise be to him who manifested His humanity,
the secret of His glorious divinity
And the visible appeared to his creation in the form of
one who eats and drinks
So that His creation could perceive Him as in the flicker
of an eye-lid.⁷³

Christ's divine and human natures find a parallel in Hallaj's concept of 'Lahut' and 'Nasut'. The concept is parallel to the concept of 'huwiat' and 'aniyat'.

⁶⁹ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol1. 2003. p 60.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p 60.

⁷¹ Ibid. p 60.

⁷² Ibid. p 60.

⁷³ Ibid. p 61.

1.2.1 Christianity

That Sufis were not completely ignorant of Christianity is clear from the fact that certain Gospel sayings are encountered in old Sufi autobiographies. There exist parables like the one from the life of Al Ghazzali adduced in Idries Shah's book *The Way of the Sufi*. Here, Ghazalli explains the appropriate way of living life through a citation from the life of Jesus. Seeing some miserably sad people, Isa enquires about the cause of their predicament. The despondent group explains the fear of hell as the cause of their misery. Another set of disconsolate people reply desire for paradise as the cause of their predicament. A third group of people with their faces shining with joy reply:

The spirit of Truth. We have seen Reality and this has made us oblivious of lesser goals.⁷⁴

Christ calls the third group nearest to God. R.A.Nicholson gives some more references to Christian teachings as assimilated in Sufi paradigm. Nicholson cites how Ahmad ibn al-Hawari asked a Christian hermit: "what is the strongest command that ye find in your scriptures?".⁷⁵ The hermit explained love for God as the foremost principle of Christianity: "love thy creator with all thy power and might".⁷⁶ The influence of Christianity as Nicholson expatiates is two-fold: "ascetic and mystical".⁷⁷ As per Nicholson's exegesis, Islamic conquest of Persia, Syria and Egypt brought Islamic mystics in contact with Christian asceticism. Asceticism and monkish austerities found a new emphasis in Sufism. Nicholson explains a new fermentation taking place within Sufism due to the numerous changes in orthodox fixities. Now, instead of fear as the prime pivot for devotion towards the divine Godhead, love as a gift of God was foregrounded. There was an increased emphasis on gnosis as against material knowledge and pantheistic immanence of God in all created things. The gradual evolution of Sufism transported the seeker towards a more convincing faith, true to their heart, palpable to the inmost soul:

Ultimately they rest upon a pantheistic faith which deposed the One transcendent God of Islam and worshipped in his

⁷⁴ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 54.

⁷⁵ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mysticism of Islam*. Kindle ed. 2010. N.pag.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

stead One Real Being who dwells and works everywhere,
and whose throne is not less, but more, in the human heart
than in the heaven of heavens.⁷⁸

1.2.2 Neo-Platonism.

Majid Fakhry in the second edition of *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, mentions *Theologica Aristotelis*, an Aristotelian compilation with unknown author, and yet attributed to the neo-Platonist Diodochus Proclus (d. 485). The text was translated into Arabic by a Syrian Christian, ‘Abd al-Masih b. Na’imah of Emassa. Plotinus is referred to in the above texts as ‘Flutinus’, also referred to as ‘al-Shaykh al- Yunani or the “Greek Sage”’.⁷⁹ The central concept which finds concurrence between the Arab philosophical thought and neo-Platonism is the theory of emanation. Al Kindi is known to have written a commentary on *Theologica*. The idea of the origin of the created beings from the ‘One’ Supreme Reality is endorsed by al-Kindi. Fakhry cites from the first chapter of the *Theologica* hence:

To discuss the divine nature and exhibit it, by showing
that it is the First Cause and that time and aeon [al-dahr]
are both beneath it...⁸⁰

The theory of emanation is explained in the *Theologica* hence: from the first cause virtue shines forth upon Reason, and further to the universal and heavenly soul, to nature and further to the objects of generation and corruption. Further, Fakhry cites from the *Theologica*, explaining how according to this text “ the abject destiny of the soul...is bound up with the “ignoble” objects of sense, in preference to the “noble” objects of reason”⁸¹. Hence, the concepts which become a part of the Islamic neo-Platonism are: “the utter transcendence of the first principle or God; the procession or emanation of things from him; the role of reason as an instrument of God in His creation, and the locus of the forms of things, as well as the source of illumination of the human mind; the position of the soul at the periphery of the

⁷⁸ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mysticism of Islam*. Kindle ed. 2010. N.pag.

⁷⁹ Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 1970. 1983. p 20.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p 22

⁸¹ Ibid. p 22

Intelligible world and the link or “horizon” between the intelligible and the sensible worlds”⁸²; and finally, says Theologica:

...this action [of the One] issues forth from it without movement; and that the movement of all things is from it and through it; and that things gravitate toward it through a species of desire or appetite.⁸³

This desire or appetite may direct the reason in two directions: (i) it may gravitate the soul towards the world of forms or (ii) it may create a proclivity towards ‘particulars’. The author of *Theologica*, explains Fakhry, “invokes the authority of Heraclitus, Empedocles, Pythagoras, and Plato, who are all said to have held that the soul descends into the body from the intelligible world and will rejoin it upon its release from the bondage of the body. This body Plato has described as a dungeon to which the Soul is temporarily consigned, whereas Empedocles has described the contempt in which matter was held, as the basest creation or emanation from the One and the lowest rung in the cosmic scale.”⁸⁴

Masood Ali Khan and S.Ram trace the development of Sufism from a purely ascetic ideal to the incorporation of gnostic elements. This change is said to have been brought about by the influence of Neo-Platonism, Persian, Indian and Buddhistic elements as well as Christian mysticism. Writes S.Ram:

Now the ascetic, while not losing altogether his ascetic ideal, tends more and more to centre his attention in Gnosis and the Zahid (ascetic) becomes the Arif (gnostic).⁸⁵

As exemplars of this characteristic in the development of Sufism, S.Ram mentions great Sufis like Ma'iu'ul-Kaikhī, Sulaymanu'd-Daini and Dhul-Nun Misri. Instead of unthinking acceptance, quietism and asceticism, the gnostic assimilated elements of "theosophy, gnosticism, ecstasy and pantheism".⁸⁶ Hujwiri in *Kashf Al- Mahjub* defines gnosis as “the life of the heart through God, and the turning away of one’s

⁸² Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 1970. 1983. p 21

⁸³ Ibid. p 21

⁸⁴ Ibid. p 31.

⁸⁵ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 1. 2003. p 58.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p 58

inmost thoughts from all that is not God”.⁸⁷ Hujwiri aptly makes a distinction between the two types of gnosis: “cognitional (‘ilmi’) and emotional (‘hali’)”⁸⁸. He presents the latter as more profound and authentic cognition of one’s connection with God. Reason and intellection take man away from the realization of God. Both reason and intellect have their limitations. Hujwiri explains that the inference of the existence of God on intellectual grounds is “assimilation (tasbih)”⁸⁹ and denial of the existence of God on the same grounds is “nullification (ta’til)”.⁹⁰ Reason and intellect operate in the phenomenal world. God cannot be limited to the phenomenal realm and hence cannot be defined by its parameters. Here is a quotation from Hakim Sinai, an early Afghan Sufi teacher, who insists on going beyond rational and intellectual faculties and gives prominence to the love-motif in Sufism:

The essence of truth is superior to the terminology of
‘How?’ or ‘Why?’⁹¹

At the same time, the proclaimed gnostics can also be pretentious and boastful about their attainment. For instance, Dhu ‘l Nun remarks: “Beware lest you make pretensions to gnosis”:

“the gnostics pretend to knowledge,
But I avow ignorance: that is my knowledge.”⁹²

Uthman Al-Makki, a disciple of Junayd is known to have advocated ecstasy as a stepping stone to attainment of God:

Ecstasy does not admit of explanation, because it is a
secret between God and the true believers.⁹³

There began a new trend, in Sufism, of expressing the palpable and the hitherto eccentric mystical ideas and views from extraneous philosophical systems. Dhu'l Nun Misri, the early Egyptian Sufi scholar and alchemist is posited as an important figure in the percolation of neo-Platonic ideas into Sufi thought. Misri's father is

⁸⁷ Ali Ibn Usman Al-Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982. p 267.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p 267.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p 270.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p 270.

⁹¹ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 100.

⁹² Ali Ibn Usman Al-Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982. p 274.

⁹³ Ibid. p 274.

known to have been a Nubian freedman of the Quraysh tribe⁹⁴. 'Quraysh' being a mercantile tribe known to have historically controlled Mecca and Kaaba, Misri outgrew the strict confines of orthodox religiosity and became a key figure in the percolation of neo- Platonic ideas into Sufi thought. This hypothesis has been endorsed by Professor Nicholson, the eminent scholar on Sufi studies. Masood Ali Khan and S.Ram also suggest:

When we remember that he [Misri] was an Egyptian, it is not too much to suppose that the school of Alexandria had too much to do with the shaping of his thought.⁹⁵

All kinds of stories and hagiographical narratives circulate around these early mystics. Simultaneously, there exist books like *The Sufi Teachings of Dhu'l-Nun* by Mohammed Rustom, which cite from the Arabic Sufi texts like *Qut al qulub* of Abu Talib al-Makki (d. 386/ 966), the *Luma* of Abu Nasr al' Sarraj (d. 378/ 988) and many others. Misri laid emphasis on gnosis and on the intuitive mystical approximation of spiritual truth revealed through divine ecstasy. Here we have the following citation from Sarraj's *Luma* as cited in Rustom's book:

The audition [sama] is a true inrush which rouses hearts for the Real. Whoever listens to it as its due attains realization, and whoever listens to it for the sake of his ego commits heresy"⁹⁶

Misri approved the capability of music to induce a state of ecstasy and consequent forgetfulness of the material world. He simultaneously undermines the value of intellect or rationalization in the progression towards the Divine Being:

Whatever eyes can see relates to knowledge ['ilm'], and whatever hearts can know relates to certainty ['yaqin'].⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Mohammed Rustom. *The Sufi Teachings of Dhul Nun*. 2013. Web. 1 May 2018. p 69.<<http://www.mohammedrustom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/The-Sufi-Teachings-of-Dhul-Nun-SW-24-2009.pdf>>

⁹⁵ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram. Eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism* .Vol 1. 2003. p 59.

⁹⁶ Mohammed Rustom. "The Sufi Teachings of Dhul Nun". 2013. Web. 4 April 2018. <<http://www.mohammedrustom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/The-Sufi-Teachings-of-Dhul-Nun-SW-24-2009.pdf>>

⁹⁷ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 1. 2003. p 71.

Persian influence on the Sufism is also well documented. Majid Fakhry documents the existence of an Arabic translation of a book of fables called *Kalila wa Dima*, translated by the Persian Ibn al-Muqaffa from Pahlavi. The book was originally written in Sanskrit. Its original author is understood as the Indian sage, Bidpai. Here is an example of how translation enables cultural, moral, religious and ethical exchange, so much so that a text like *Kalilawa Dimma* acquires perennial value in the literary profile of Arabic and “has always occupied a prominent position in the history of Arabic prose, as well as in moral exhortation.”⁹⁸

After the accession of the Abbassids in 750 A.D., the Arabs and the Persians stood eyeball to eyeball at an interface between their cultural and religious competitiveness. The new generation of Persian thinkers became instrumental in transmitting Greek and Persian ideas into the Islamic theology. These aspects of cultural exchange contributed to the consequent syncretism in Sufi mysticism. Fakhry remarks that the immense influence of the Persians can be understood by the fact that “the chief luminaries of Islam were of Persian origin: the greatest Grammarian Sibawah (d.793 A.D.c), the greatest philosopher, ibn Sina (d. 1037A.D.), and the greatest theologian, al Ghazali”.⁹⁹

1.2.3 Indian Mystical Trends

Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram document the importance of “extraneous influences” on Sufism in its “evolution to the sublimity it has come to acquire”¹⁰⁰. Occupation of Makran and Kankan by the Arab army as early as A.D. 672 and the conquest of Sind by the Abbasid Empire triggered a chain of cross-cultural interactions. S. Ram documents the translation of *Brihamsiddhanta* and *Khandakhadyaka* into Arabic during the time period of Mansur al-Hallaj. The period of khalifa Harunu Rashid saw the translation of Sanskrit treatises on arithmetic, philosophy, astrology and medicine into Arabic. The visit of Al Muwaffiq and Al Beruni around 1030 A.D. to India and their appreciation and documentation of “Indian Literature, religion, philosophy,

⁹⁸ Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 1983. p 35

⁹⁹ Ibid. p 36

¹⁰⁰ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram. eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism* .Vol 2. 2003. p 143.

chronology, astronomy, geography, astrology, customs and laws..."¹⁰¹ speaks volumes about the indispensable and healthy cross-cultural interaction. Al Beruni is known to have translated Kapila's *Samkhya* and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, as well as introduced *Srimadbhagavadgita* to his people. Khan and S. Ram comment on the escalation in literary and philosophical exchanges, "for down the centuries Sufis began to study Hindu scriptures, their attitude mellowed towards idolatory and polytheism".¹⁰² This process reached its acme with Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shahjahan. Dara's Persian translations of the *Ramayana*, the *Gita*, the *Upanishads* and the *Yogavashista* gained fame. S. Ram writes:

The Surr-i-Akbar translation of the Upanishads, begins with 'Om Sri Ganeshaya Namah'. According to Dara Shikoh, the opening chapter of the Koran, Sura Fatiha, is Omu'l-Quran which he regarded as corresponding to the Vedic word OM in both meaning and context.¹⁰³

As expected, Dara Shikoh meets the same fate as Hallaj and Sarmad. The fight against man-made stringent confines of Hinduism and Islam was hence fought by men from both sides of communal divide.

Another seminal Sufi, Abu Yazid'l Bistami (804-874 CE), also called Bayazid Bistami is an exemplary figure of the cultural and intellectual amalgam we are looking at. Bayazid Bistami has a Persian ancestry. His grand father, Sharawan, is known to have been a zoroastrian. His Sufi teacher, Abu Ali of Sind, has Indian origin. Ideologically, Bistami is known for his pantheistic ideas. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram cite his famous saying:

Beneath this cloak of mine, there is nothing but God.
Glory to me! How great is my majesty! Verily I am God;
there is no God beside me, so worship me!¹⁰⁴

Abu Ali was from the Indian region of Sind. R.C.Zaehner's research on Bistami and his spiritual teacher is elaborated in a thesis published in two books: (i) *Mysticism:*

¹⁰¹ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram. eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism* .Vol 2. 2003. p 143.

¹⁰² Ibid. p 143.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p 143.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p 60.

Sacred and Profane (ii) *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*. In the latter, Zaehner cogitates that “Abu Ali of Sind was a convert; Bistami taught him how to perform the obligatory duties of Islam; since a convert from Sind, then necessarily a convert from Hinduism; and if Hindu, then surely acquainted with Sankara's monism, which ultimate truths he must have conveyed to Bistami”.¹⁰⁵

The Sufi understanding of the divine Being and the conception of God in Indian mysticism have striking similarities. The ‘Wahadau’l Wujud’ (unity of Being) of Sufi paradigm corresponds with the Indian concept of ‘Advaita’ (non-dualism’). The explanation offered by the Sufis is that God created this universe out of the creative Truth (‘Haqq’). Creative Truth is the substance (‘hayula’) of the universe. God does not divide Himself into parts in the process of creation. Instead, explain Masood Ali Khan and S.Ram:

Creative Truth lent his ideal prototypes (haqa’iq) the name of creatureliness in order that the mysteries of Dvinity and their necessary counterparts may be made manifest.¹⁰⁶

Even the analogies used by the two mystical frameworks have a striking similarity. Explaining the concept of wahadatu’l Wujud, Jili says:

The Universe is like ice, and God, the Magnified and Exalted, is the water which is the origin of this ice. The name ice is lent to that frozen thing and the name water is the right name for it.¹⁰⁷

Khan and S.Ram cite an example of the explanation of non-dualism offered by a Vedantist, from *Chhandogya Upanishad*:

Uddalaka explains to his son Svetaketu the mystery how the things that exist spring from the primary Unitary Being. For example, clay may be moulded into several

¹⁰⁵ R.C. Zaehner. *Hindu and Muslim mysticism*.1960.Web. 1 May, 2018. p 91.

¹⁰⁶ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram. eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism* .Vol 2. 2003. p 145.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p 145.

things...the reality behind every article is only clay.¹⁰⁸

In a similar vein, there emerges the following concept in *The Bhagwad Geeta*: "Names and forms are like bangles and bracelets and Vishnu is like gold."¹⁰⁹ Further, Ramanuja's 'Vishistadvaita' or 'modified non-dualism' corresponds well with the Sufic 'Wahadatu'l Shuhud'. 'Vishistadvaita' or 'modified non-dualism' understands God and his creation as separate, though the creation inclines itself towards the attainment of the divine. Where advaita or non-dualistic model focuses on the concept of 'All is He', the 'Vishistadvaita' or 'modified non-dualism' points towards the concept of 'All is from Him'. The latter was, however, misplaced and misused by autocratic opportunists like Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Sirhindi (1564–1624), who placed himself in the position of the divine Godhead and subjugated his subjects with abject claims of self-deification.

Early Sufis like Al- Bistami and Al- Hallaj regarded Muhammad's role as mediator between God and man as somewhat secondary. Al- Bistami took resort to "extravagancies" ('shahadat')¹¹⁰, which have a bearing on the general mystical themes of ecstasy and union with God, and imply an insinuation of self- deification, but without any presumptuous or blasphemous intention. Zaehner, in *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, expatiates how Bistami lived chronologically at the time in which the revival and systematization of Vedantic thought itself was being actively pursued by Shankara (d. 820). Other than Bistami's utterances: "Glory be to me", "I am Thou", "I am I",¹¹¹ Zaehner cites the wildest of his utterances, from Al Salhaji's *Manaqib al Bistami*, where in his search for God, Bistami proclaims: " I plunged into the ocean of malakut [the realm of ideas], and the veils of divinity ['lahut'], until I reached the throne and lo! It was empty; so I cast myself upon it and said: "Master, where shall I seek thee? And the veils were lifted up and I saw that I am I, yea I am I. I turned back into what I sought, and it was I and no other, into which I was going".¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p 145.

¹⁰⁹ *Bhagwad Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nikhilananda. 1947. p164.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p 76.

¹¹¹ Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 1970. 1983. p 273.

¹¹² Ibid. p 273.

The capacity for making such extravagant claims in the ninth century, without impunity, comes from the expedient deployed by Sufis like al- Bistami: "affected madness". Ali Bin Uthman Al-Hujwiri writes in *Kashf Al- Mahjub*:

Do you not see that Shibli said: "Al Hallaj and I are of one belief, but my madness saved me, while his intelligence destroyed him."¹¹³

Other Sufis like Ibn Sina, al- Shibli (d. 945), Abi'l Khayr (d. 1049), in the next two centuries gave emphatic expression to features of extravagant mysticism, such as eccentric behaviour and affected madness.

It is interesting to note the parallels between the Indian bhakti poetry and Sufi poetry. Motilal Jotwani discusses the use of the poetic form 'doha' as common to both Bhakti poets and Sufi poets like Sachal and Dalpat. The content of the verses of both move around advaita (non-dualism). The tradition of Bhakti and Sufi cult are co-terminous and co-incidental on the Indian soil, despite proclamations, by the orthodox Hindus and Islamists, of their ideological and conceptual exclusivity. If Bhakti is understood as a Dravidian revolt against what Taufiq Rafat calls "the Aryan sacerdotalism and philosophy"¹¹⁴, so was Sufism a departure from orthodox Islamic ritualism and staunchness. In form, both Bhakti and Sufi tradition expressed themselves in an idiom close to the modes of localized speech patterns, gravitating away from strict prosodic regulations and elitism associated with Sanskrit and Persian. The connections do not end here. There is also a prominent sense of contemporaneous development of the two. Though distanced geographically, the temporal framework of early Bhakti poets and the early Sufis coheres quite well. Ramanuja (d.1137) the early Tamil poet, Madhava (1197-1276) the Karanese poet and Nimbarka, the Telugu poet placed in the thirteenth century find a parallel set of Sufi poets in the North: Moinuddin Chishti (1142–1236 A.D.), Baha-ud-din Zakariya (1170–1262 A.D.) and Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki (1173–1235 A.D.). Bakhtiar Kaki's most famous disciple and spiritual successor was Fariduddin Ganjshakar (1173-1265A.D.), who in turn became the spiritual master of Delhi's noted Sufi saint, Nizamuddin Auliya (d. 1325

¹¹³ Ali Ibn Usman Al-Hujwiri. *The Kashf Al- Mahjub*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. 1982. p 151.

¹¹⁴ Taufiq Rafat. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. 2014. p10.

A.D.), who himself was the spiritual master of Amir Khusrau (d.1325 A.D.) and Nasiruddin Chirag-e-Delhi. Another important contemporaneous Sufi figure is Syed Usman Marvadi (1177-1274 A.D.), popularly called Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. Amir Khusrau enjoys an iconic place in the history of Indian Sufi literature. This mystic disciple of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, wrote in Persian as well as Hindavi. His verses are replete with the Sufi impulse of intense desire for the divine Beloved. The most popular lines from Amir Khusrau, eulogizing his spiritual mentor, display absolute submission and reverence towards the teacher

*Chhap tilak sab cheeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Prem bhatee ka madhva pilaikay
Matvali kar leeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Gori gori bayyan, hari hari churiyan
Bayyan pakar dhar leeni ray mosay naina milaikay*

You've taken away my looks, my identity, by just a glance.
By making me drink the wine of love,
You've intoxicated me by just a glance;
My fair, delicate wrists with green bangles on them,
Have been held tightly by you with just a glance.¹¹⁵

In an article, “Amir Khusrau’s lasting tryst with love”, Pranav Khullar writes:

At the heart of the Sufi mystical experience lies ‘zikr’ or remembrance of God. In its musical expression through Quawalli, it has become synonymous with Amir Khusrau, whose musical idiom presented a unique synthesis of the Persian and Hindu-Braja cultures. His prodigious literary and musical experimentation is a unique effort at creating a universal Sufi language of love..¹¹⁶

Syed Usman Marvandi (1177–1274 A.D.), popularly known as Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, was a Sufi saint and religious-poet of Pakistan and Afghanistan. He is highly regarded and respected by people of all religions because he preached religious tolerance among

¹¹⁵ “Amir Khusrau quotes”. Web. visited 18 september, 2018.

<https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/3422102.Amir_Khusrau>

¹¹⁶ Pranav Khullar. “Amir Khusrau’s lasting tryst with love”. The Times of India. 17th November 2008. Web. 18 November 2018. <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>>

Muslims and Hindus. He was called *Lal* ("ruby-colored") after his usual red attire and "Shahbaz" to denote a noble and divine spirit and "Qalandar" as he was a wandering holy man. The spiritual song "Dama Dam Mast Qalandar" glorifies Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's teachings, and the song is widely cherished in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram in the second volume of the *Encyclopaedia of Sufism* cite Lal Shahbaz hence: "I banished duality from my mind, and saw both the worlds as One—So I See One. Seek One, know One, and Proclaim One."¹¹⁷ In Multan, he met Baha-ud-din Zakariya of the Suhrawardiyya order, Baba Fariduddin Ganjshakar of the Chishtiyya and Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari. The friendship of these four became legendary, they were known as the 'Chaar Yar'.

Taufiq Rafat aptly presents significant parallels between Bulleh Shah and the 'Vacana' tradition Bhakti poets from Kannada from 1100 to 1200 AD. The most perspicuous similarity between the two apart from parallel mystical traits is the spontaneity of the verses, close to everyday colloquial speech pattern and rhythm. Rafat quotes Kanarese Chowdayya's free verse:

Winnow, winnow!
 Look here, fellows,
 Winnow when the wind blows.
 Remember the winds
 Are not in your hands,
 Remember you cannot say
 I'll winnow, I'll winnow
 Tomorrow.¹¹⁸

Rafat compares it with Bulleh Shah's dexterous employment of localized metaphor:

Lass, look to your spinning
 The new cotton crop is in.
 Take it for scouring, and then

¹¹⁷ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p 285.

¹¹⁸ Taufiq Rafat. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. 2014. p 12.

Sit down to spin and spin,
 Or spinning time will be gone
 Lass look to your spinning.¹¹⁹

There is a similarity in the inversion of the 'carpe diem' theme and engagement of scarcity of time in focused labour instead of losing it in wasteful meaningless activity. There are also similarities with the works of Kannada poets Basavanna, Dasimayya, Mahadeviyakka and Allama Prabhu:

Two characteristics were distinct in this poetry. It broke with the conventional polytheistic religion conveyed through Sanskrit and took one God, Shiva, for celebration in a local dialect; and it assumed an iconoclastic tone which subverted the orthodoxy and delivered sharp rebuke to the spiritually complaisant.¹²⁰

The "local dialect", "iconoclastic tone", subversion of orthodoxy and delivering sharp rebuke to the complaisant all cohere so well with the description of Bulleh Shah's verses. The sense of pain of an ardent lover for the divine Beloved is expressed in parallel expressions in Basvanna:

Siva, you have no mercy
 Siva, you have no heart
 Why did you bring me to birth
 Wretch in this world
 Exile from the others?¹²¹

And here is Bulleh Shah's parallel enunciation:

Don't take on this thing called Bhakti
 Like a saw
 It cuts when it goes
 And it cuts again
 When it comes.
 If you risk your hand

¹¹⁹ Taufiq Rafat. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. 2014. p12.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p 12

¹²¹ Ibid. p 12

With a cobra in a pitcher
 Will it let you
 Pass?¹²²

Rafat also brings to our notice Mahadeviyakka (twelfth century) describing God as an illicit lover and explains how she brings to mind Bulleh Shah's description of God as thief, in his famous Kafi, "Meri bukkal de vicch chor". What we notice in all of the above mentioned instances is the poet-lover's intense devotion for the divine Beloved expressed in an idiom which takes the lover and the Beloved by turns or together out of the fold of laity or the commonplace and re-situates both in a position of either utter humility or marginalized position in a gesture of extreme self-abasement. Bulleh Shah says:

I am just a sweeppress.
 Hair uncombed, barefoot, I receive word
 Of his coming...
 Being untouchable none comes near me...
 This is my life: cold and sickness and scorn,
 An empty stomach, clothes that are torn.¹²³

Mahadeviyakka is quoted hence by Rafat:

O brothers why do you talk
 To this woman,
 Hair loose,
 Face withered,
 Body shrunk?¹²⁴

What are we trying to say and what do these parallels mean. What is the underpinning of these intense parallels between poets geographically situated so far away, even temporally distanced by more than four centuries and linguistically different from each other. These parallels seem to come from the same source wherefrom come parallels like al-Hallaj's 'anal Haqq' and Shankaracharya's 'Shivoham Shivoham'. The trans-mental structures and a deep delving into the

¹²² Taufiq Rafat. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. 2014. p 12

¹²³ Ibid. p 14

¹²⁴ Ibid. p14

inner-most mystical instincts of mankind takes humanity to the core of the mystical springs of human life. This epicenter would be the hub of what Goethe calls 'weltliteratur' or world literature: compilations of literatures from around the world springing from the inner-most convictions, feelings and emotions of mankind, which despite their manifold variations would concur at some point of its inception. The Ideological concurrences between the Sufi cult and the Bhakti cult explain the tremendous success of the Sufi poets in the Indian sub-continent. Self- abnegation, asceticism and renunciation of worldly life with the ultimate aim of finding repose in self-effacement and merger with the divine source. Undeniably, the ultimate union between the individual 'I' and the Supreme 'I' is the final aim of both the Sufi and the Bhakti poet and this is where the two cohere. Writes Popati Hiranandani:

The essence of the doctrine of Sufism is, " You are the one whom you seek". The seer and the seen are the one and the same.¹²⁵

In this context Mansur-al-Hallaj's " I am Truth", where the only Truth with an abiding and permanent value is the Supreme Being, finds an indispensable parallel in Shankara's " Aham Brahmasmi", " I am the Creator". In both Sufi and Bhakti form of mysticism, the subject and the object become one in the sublime moment of self-realization. In this moment, self-realization becomes synonymous with God-realization. These simple one-liners are elaborated upon by Sufis in very impressive and moving allegories as well as analogies drawn from real life experiences. Popti Hiranadani adduces an allegory accorded to the Sufis, one which has been elaborately dwelt upon by Attar in *The Conference of Birds*:

Once birds of all kinds decided to find their king Simurgha, the bird with the golden wings. They flew towards the valley, where Simurgha lived. Leaving behind all those who were tired and were tempted by the luxuries of the midway, thirty of them reached the valley. When they descended, they found that their wings have turned golden and they are themselves the Simurgha. ('Si' means thirty and 'murgha' means birds)¹²⁶

Motilal Jotwani places Latif directly within the fold of the 'Bhakti' tradition. He discusses

¹²⁵ Popti Hiranandani. *Sindhis: The Secret Treasure*. 1980. p 85.

¹²⁶ Ibid. p 85.

the contours of what he terms "Indian Sufism", in his introduction to the book *Shah Abdul Latif: Seeking the Beloved*. Sindhi Sufism varies from the Middle East in that the human seeker assumes the role of the female lover desiring the divine Beloved who is a male. In the tradition of Kabir who says "Rama is my husband, I am his little bride", Shah Latif becomes the female protagonist of the Sindhi folk tales whether Sasui, Moomal or Sohini and desires union with the divine beloved, Punhoon, Rano or Sahar. While the Islamic mould preserves a certain level of distance between the seeker and the sought, the Sufis abrogate this gap as in the following verse from the *Risalo*:

When I become Punhun, I know the pain
For I was Punhun myself.¹²⁷

The sentiment synchronizes well with the Vedantic precept: 'Tat tvam asi' (That thou art.) Shah Latif reinforces the idea in "sur Kalyan" hence:

The sound and its echo are the same.
Before utterance, the echo and the sound were one
Then became two and then again one.¹²⁸

Jethwani concludes with an apt remark: "This is pure Vedanta philosophy of One in All; All in one."¹²⁹ This is the advaita philosophy driven home by the saint poet through examples drawn from quotidian empirical experiences. Jalaludin Rumi advocates annihilation of the distinction between "this and that" and to free oneself from the "tyranny" of dualism:

O Heart! Until, in the prison of deception,
You can see the difference between This and That,
For an instant detach from this Well of Tyranny; stand
outside.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p

¹²⁸ Aruna Jethwani. *The Sufi: Shah Abdul Latif*. 2013. p 20.

i j k M k s l k s l M q o: o k b a v t k s t s y g h a

g q v k v x g h a x M q c q' . k q e a c f / ; k a

यदि वाणी का रहस्य जानना चाहते हो तो सुनो। प्रतिध्वनि बोला हुआ शब्द ही है। ये ध्वनि और प्रतिध्वनि मिली हुई हैं, केवल सुनने में दो अर्थात् भिन्न हो गई

॥ (Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 48)

¹²⁹ Ibid. p 20.

¹³⁰ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. p106.

The third section of Majid Fakhry's discussion on Sufism called "synthesis and systematization-- Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi" explains the gestalt and the logos of striking compatibility and a balance in the co-existence of orthodoxy and individualist subjectivity of the Sufi poets. Al-Ghazali's chief masters are documented as al-Junayd, al-Makki, al-Bistami and al-Shibli. Ghazali formulated a radical mystical creed essentially compatible with orthodoxy. The three key elements of Ghazali's 'synthesis and systematization' are delineated by Fakhry hence:

- (i) The Koranic concept of a Supreme Being, wholly other than the world, which he created by an unconditioned act of free will.
- (ii) The neo-Platonic hierarchy of being in which reason serves as a link between God and his creation.¹³¹
- (iii) The Hallajian concept of God dwelling in the soul and using it as an instrument.¹³²

Such a fine amalgamation of ideas can be termed a pragmatic re-alignment of mystical ideas, with no malice against anyone and no loss to one's personal spiritual sentiments. Al Ghazali serves the dual purpose of not contesting the omnipotence and other-worldliness of the divine Being and yet makes that divine force approachable and attainable via a neo-Platonic link between the human and the divine Being. Similar

¹³¹ Majid Fakhry, in the fourth chapter of the second edition of *The History of Islamic Philosophy*, discusses the incorporation of neo-platonism in the development of Sufi mysticism, in particular through al-Farabi, a diligent scholar from Farab, Transoxania, impressed by neo-Platonic philosophy of Proclus. In neo-Platonic thought, pure and absolute consciousness called the First Principle (analogous to the divine realm in Sufi paradigm) has beneath it, and derived from the first principle, the existence of individual consciousness. The first principle is denominated as the first hypostasis while the derivative sub-ordinate consciousnesses are included in the second hypostases. In an attempt to understand itself and its cause, the subordinate consciousnesses attempt to revert and retrace their steps to their point of origin, and become cognizant of the first principle as the ontological principle of their own existence. Human consciousness is over-ridden with a consciousness of separation from the Platonic realm of forms, of ideas, of the absolute and transcendent first principle. Overcoming this disjunction or dichotomy is the aim of Sufi as well as the neo-Platonist. The latter takes a step to bridge this gap. 'Reason' becomes the stepping stone from the shadowy, materialist, phenomenal world and the ideal world; between the second hypostasis and the first principle. However, for the neo-Platonists, this reason is not just a rational faculty pertaining to the intellect. Al Farabi conceives of 'reason' from three vantage points: "the epistemological, the cosmological and the metaphysical" (Fakhry, 123). Another Sufi figure influenced by Al Farabi, as discussed by Fakhry, is Abu 'Ali al-Husain Ibn Sina, also called Avicenna. Following Al Farabi's belief in emanation, Ibn Sina registers a belief in the possible ascent of human reason and understanding so as to bridge the gap between 'forms', the archetype in the ideal world and its manifestation in the intelligible world: "the perfection proper to the soul is to become identified with the intelligible world in which the form of the whole, its rational order and the good overflowing from it are inscribed." (Fakhry, 145) (cited by Majid Fakhry in the second edition of *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, from Ibn Sina's *Ahwal al-Nafs*)

¹³² Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 1983. p 277.

pragmaticism was admonished by Shah Inayat to his disciple Bulleh Shah to avoid becoming prey to the insecure and power-hungry elite. The highest type of knowledge is not that of intellect or that of faith, but that of direct experience. Al- Ghazli tried philosophy and dialectics, but nothing satisfied him except the intuitive, instinctive realization of God. Idries Shah in *The Way of the Sufi*, explains how Ghazli took resort to the scientific and the logical method in his search for truth and his enunciations like, "to the sick man sweet water tastes bitter in the mouth"¹³³ are a testimony to the same. However, Ghazali himself discredits "mechanical intellection"¹³⁴ as efficient in reaching the truth. Idries Shah applauds Ghazali's foregrounding "the problem of conditioning", which represses the individual's capacity for taking a divergent route, distinct from the herd instinct. Ghazali's stand in his *Book of Knowledge* is that conditioning is not inescapable, and insists that it is essential for people to be able to identify it. Recognition of the possibility of escape from the conditioned mind has as its tacit concomitant a resistant mind capable of ameliorating the inner malaise. For Ghazali, this inner malaise which humans need to resist is the malaise of worldly comfort and of getting inured to worldly wisdom as a cushion against all suffering and discomfort. Like many other Sufis, Ghazali uses parables to drive home his Sufi principles. Death has to be experienced in life itself. One needs to renounce the comfort zone of materialism to prepare for its absence after death:

You must prepare yourself for the transition in which there will be none of the things to which you have accustomed yourself. After death your identity will have to respond to stimuli of which you have a chance to get a foretaste here. If you remain attached to the few things with which you are familiar, it will only make you miserable.¹³⁵

Ghazali recounts a parable from the life of Jesus to elucidate the starting aim of Sufi mysticism. As recounted by Idries Shah, Jesus witnesses a group of people sitting miserably by the roadside. When enquired about the cause of their affliction, they express fear of hell as their malady. Further on the way, Jesus encounters another set of people, the cause of whose discomfiture is recounted as anxiety and desire for

¹³³ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 51.

¹³⁴ Ibid. p 52.

¹³⁵ Ibid. p 55.

paradise. Isa comes across a third group:

They looked like people who had endured much, but their faces shone with joy. Isa asked them: 'what has made you like this?' and they answered: "the spirit of Truth. We have seen Reality, and this has made us oblivious of lesser goals".¹³⁶

Here, Sufism assimilates the Christian spirit of rejoicing in the benediction of God, oblivious of fear of hell or desire for heaven. Ghazali aptly dismantles the institutional religion's power- wielding capacity, which instils fear of hell or intense hankering after heaven in the minds of laymen. Having unburdened itself of indoctrination of pre-conceived notions of conventional piety, Ghazali ventures on to the pre-requisite of strict sincerity in attaining the Supreme soul. Ghazali also removes doubt about the desirability or non-desirability of the mystic audition or 'sama' as a vehicle for union with God. 'Sama' can become a valid vehicle only when coupled with single-minded devotion of the seeker:

Onlookers whose motives are not worthy shall be excluded. The participants in audition must sit silently and not look at each other. They seek what may appear from their own hearts.¹³⁷

The method for ensuring such absolute sincerity is also prescribed by Ghazali:

...Fast completely for three days. Then have luscious dishes cooked. If you then prefer the "dance", you may take part in it.¹³⁸

As regards territorial mobility and cross- cultural amalgam, we need to remember that there was large scale mobility of poets and dervishes from one place to another. This made eclecticism and inclusivity the mainstay of the Sufi mind, open as they were to extraneous influences in their quest for the divine source and the ultimate 'Reality'. A.K.Brohi draws attention to the fact that Shah Abdul Latif, who adorned Sindhi poetry with the rich jewel of his *Risalo*, had come into contact with Sindh just

¹³⁶ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 54.

¹³⁷ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 55.

¹³⁸ Ibid. p 56.

two generations previous to him. His family migrated from Herat, Afghanistan, two generations before Latif.

Similar attempt at 'synthesis and systematization' between orthodox religion and personal mystical convictions was made by Ibn Arabi. The thirteenth century Sufi of great fame, Mohiuddin ibn el-Arabi was denominated as 'Sheikh el-Akbar' (the greatest Sheikh) by the Arabs and by the Christian west as 'Doctor Maximus'.¹³⁹ Arabi discusses three kinds of knowledge. First is intellectual knowledge which is based on factual information. Second is the emotional knowledge of states in the approximation of God. These are fleeting and evanescent, hence short-lived and unavailing. Third is the knowledge of reality, which transcends both the previous forms of knowledge: "these are the real Sufis, the Dervishes who have Attained."¹⁴⁰

Such Sufis of the highest order relinquish their ego as a gesture of total submission to the divine Beloved:

The Sufi abandons the three 'I's. He does not say 'for me', 'with me', or 'my property'. He must not attribute anything to himself.¹⁴¹

Arabi spoke of the human race or Adam's progeny in terms of superlative praise. He reserves to the prophets and saints a position of undoubted pre-eminence: the "reality of Muhammad" is the perfection in man corresponding to the prophetic logos.¹⁴² Ibn Arabi understands this perfection as manifested not in the historical personality of Mohammad, but rather his eternal spirit: "man is thus for Ibn Arabi the embodiment of the universal Reason and Being in whom all the attributes and perfections of God are reflected."¹⁴³

Huston Smith, in the foreword to Fadiman's *Essential Sufism*, explains three modes of union with the divine being. One of the modes is ecstatic losing oneself in communion with God and getting transported into a state outside of one's normative, mundane body consciousness. In such a state they get dissociated from the normal

¹³⁹ Ibid. p 76.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p 78.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p 81.

¹⁴² Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 1983. p 282.

¹⁴³ Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 1983. p 283.

quotidian logistics of existence. Writes Huston:

Sufis honour their ecstasies, but they refer to them (affectionately) as "spiritual drunkards" because their God-intoxication dissociates them from the ordinary world.¹⁴⁴

The second category of Sufi mystics are the gnostics. However, their mode of knowing God is intuitive rather than empirical, emotive rather than rational in the ordinary sense of the term. Says Hakim Jami:

Stop boasting of intellect and learning; for here intellect is hampering, and learning is stupidity.¹⁴⁵

Like the 'gyan marga' devotional poets of the Bhakti movement, the gnostics actively engage in unearthing the truth of human life and God and the connection between the two. In doing so, they debunk the ritualistic and formalistic elements of institutional religion and establish a close proximity between the seeker and the sought, the human and the divine. In this stage, the gnostic rationally and logically exposes and disowns the ludicrous and man-made definitions which, to use T.S.Eliot's terminology from "The love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock", fix humans into a "formulated phrase" and humanity keeps suffering, pinned down by narrow caste and communal confines and smothered in claustrophobic compartments. Such man-made definitions lead to devolution and suffering of mankind. Seminal Sufi saint, Jalaludin Rumi, with his cosmic consciousness undermines such intellectual and rational stance in favour of total ignorance of his true identity.

*What can I do, Muslims? I do not know myself.
I am no Christian, no Jew, no Magian, no Musalman.
Not of the East, not of the West. Not of the land, not of the sea.
Not of the Mine of nature, not of the circling heavens,
not of the earth, not of the water, not of the air, not of the fire;
Not of the throne, not of the ground, of existence, of being;
Not of India, China, Bulgaria, Sasqueen;
Not of the kingdom of the Iraqs, or of Khorasan;
Not of this world nor the next: of heaven or hell;*

¹⁴⁴ James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds. *Essential Sufism*. 1997. p ix.

¹⁴⁵ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 97

*Not of Adam, Eve, the gardens of paradise or Eden...*¹⁴⁶

Rumi disowns belongingness to the empirical material world. The poet places himself chronotopically, to use Mikhail Bakhtin's term, in a spaceless timeless time-space graph (Diagram 1). Rumi denies his spatial and temporal confinement to any point between the 'x' and the 'y' axes, where 'x' co-ordinate stands for time and 'y' co-ordinate stands for space. If at all, the mystic poet Rumi would allow himself to be pinned down to the zero point of intersection of the two axes, where he can identify with the zero of the 'z' axis of divine love, and the 'real'-ization of unity of being. This is the condition-less condition of zeroing down to nothingness to realize one's quintessential identity.

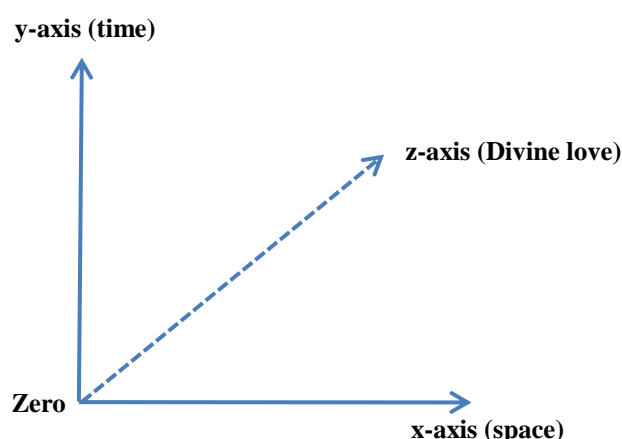


Diagram-1

After all the possible negations of his religious, geographical or national belongingness, Rumi expresses his true identity in union with the divine beloved: the essence of human being emanating from and culminating into "the life of my beloved".

My place placeless, my trace traceless.

Neither body or soul: all is the life of my beloved.¹⁴⁷

Rumi makes chronotopic disavowal of fixed human identity, crystallized by parameters defined by human understanding. We come across the following observation by Vishwanath in his book, *Sufi Sant Rumi: Sufiana Kalam*:

¹⁴⁶ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. pp103-104.

¹⁴⁷ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. pp 103-104

He doesnot believe that he can be circumscribed by any particular belief system. He even abnegates the possibility that he can be restricted by fetters of time or space.¹⁴⁸

Whereas the ecstatic states of Sufism are considered as short-lived and fleeting, the gnostic is understood as capable of incorporating and consolidating the ecstatic's divine-consciousness with the everyday and the normative living.

The third group of Sufis is the most popular and is founded on love of human seeker for God, the Beloved. Excellent Sufi poets like Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif, whose poetry enjoys the eminence of Rumi and Rabia, wonderfully express human connection with God in the idiom of love of soul for the Super-soul, of Heer for Ranjha, of Sohini for Sahar, Rano for Moomal and of Sasui for Punhu. Love in its sterling dimension culminates in self-effacement and self- annihilation. The path of love is not easy. It requires a heart and a soul full of strength, forbearance, and a capacity to bear all kinds of catastrophes. Raskhan, the devotional Bhakti poet says: "love's wayward path is slender as the tendril of a lotus, yet hard as a sword's blade. It is straight and then again sinuous."¹⁴⁹ In the section "Being a Lover: The Sunrise Ruby", Rumi explains the principal of love as not one of elatedly brandishing such a connetion between the lover and the divine Beloved; instead, being in love entails harsh discipline and self-denial as well as submitting one's very identity to the Beloved. When the Beloved asks whether the lover loves himself or the Beloved more, the lover replies:

"There's nothing left of me.

I'm like a ruby held up to the sunrise.

Is it still a stone, or a world

¹⁴⁸ Vishwanath. *Sufi Sant Rumi: Sufiana Kalam*. 2014.p1. Says Vishwanath:
og ugha ekurs gsf d mlga fd l h erfo' ksk ; k fo' okl dh i fjf/ ea l e v/ k
tk l drk gA og bl l shkh bckj d jrs gsf d l e ; k v rjky dh d kbz tathj
mlga ck/ l drh gA

¹⁴⁹ Krishna P. Bahadur. *Sufi Mysticism*. 1999. p 63.

made of redness? It has no resistance
to sunlight."¹⁵⁰

Rumi explains:

This is how Hallaj said, I am God,
and told the truth!
The ruby and the sunrise are one.
Be courageous and discipline yourself.
Completely become hearing and ear,
and wear this sun-ruby as an earring.
Work. Keep digging your well.
Don't think about getting off from work.
Water is there somewhere.
Submit to a daily practice.
Your loyalty to that
is a ring on the door.
Keep knocking, and the joy inside
will eventually open a window
and look out to see who's there.¹⁵¹

It is the unmitigated and unconditional devotion and submission of the human lover for the divine Beloved, which leads to union between the two. It is the faith in the existence of water somewhere deep there and the faith that there is a placid and ethereal vision outside the window which can sustain human efforts and eventually lead to the actuation of such a vision. Hakim Jami says:

Love becomes perfect only when it transcends itself--
Becoming one with its object;
Producing unity of Being.¹⁵²

Nicholson expatiates that in Sufi paradigm, "all the love- romances and allegories of Sufi poetry... are shadow pictures of the soul's passionate longing to be reunited with

¹⁵⁰ *The Essential Rumi*. Trans. Coleman Barks. 1996. p100.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. p 101.

¹⁵² Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. p 98.

God.”¹⁵³ Nicholson asserts an infallible and inevitable union of the seeker and the sought, if the desire is pure and intense. Nicholson quotes Rumi: “‘A man comes to be the thing on which he is bent’”.¹⁵⁴ Further substantiating the argument, writes Nicholson:

Eckhart in one of his sermons quotes the saying of St. Augustine that man is what he loves, and adds this comment:

If he loves a stone, he is a stone; if he loves a man, he is a man; if he loves God—I dare not say any more, for if I said that he would then be God, ye might stone me.”¹⁵⁵

The union between the human and the divine Beloved, for which many of the early Sufis were tortured to death, finds a clear enunciation in Jaluluddin Rumi:

O my soul. I searched from end to end:
I saw in thee naught save the Beloved;
Call me not infidel, O my soul, if I say
That thou thyself art He.
...Ye who in search of God, of God pursue,
Ye need not search for God is you, is you!
Why seek ye something that was missing ne'er? Save
you none is, but you are—where, oh, where?¹⁵⁶

Sufism emerges as a site of Hindu- Muslim 'samagam' and the breakdown of Hindu-Muslim ideational freeze. Hindu- Muslim amalgam is apparent in the Sufi adoption of Hindu customs. Ajwani cites Arberry hence:

Pilgrimages to shrines of the saint, giving offerings and making vows, burning chiragh, the oil lamp with a wick, over the tomb of a saint, the partaking of sweets and food given as offering on tombs and shrines of saints as sacred portio, are not indigenous to Islam, but a result of the influence of Hindu environment...¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ R.A.Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mystics of Islam*. Kindle ed. IndoEuropean Publishing, 2010. N.Pag.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 49.

Sufis from Iran expressed their love longing in 'pharsee'. Having entered India, the process of Indianization of 'tazawuf' set in. There emerged a set of Muslim Sufi poets, Indian in origin and having a popular Sufi saint as their teacher. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar mentions Malik Muhammad Jayasi as their leader. These poets wrote their love-longings in 'Masnavis' written in Avadhi and used the poetic form 'doha' and 'chaupai'. Jayasi wrote *Padmavat* during the reign of Sher Shah Suri. Kutuban wrote *Mrigavati*. The writing of these texts involved a process of Indianization of Tasawuuf as well as a step towards Hindu-Muslim unity. Writes Dinkar:

There was a time when these poetic epics made a marvellous contribution in the direction of Hindu-Muslim unity. Pandit Ram Chandra Shukl has written that “these poets removed the alienation and antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims. Being Muslims themselves, these poets related the stories of the Hindus in the language of the Hindus, in soulful verses, with heart-felt empathy for the heart-rending states displayed in them.”¹⁵⁸ (Translation mine)

Jayasi transcends narrow and restrictive communal confines. He appropriately criticizes Alauddin Khilji as symbolic of 'maya' and deplores his torturous attitudes towards the Hindus. Jayasi also expresses his disapproval of Raghavcheta, a character who is critical of the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*. And yet, Jayasi evokes Prophet Mohammad and prays to him at the beginning of the text and never tries to hide his own Muslim identity.

Further, as regards Hindu-Muslim relations, it is important to understand that Muslims fought battles not just with Hindus, but with Muslims as well. The tussle was hence

¹⁵⁸ Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 334. Says Dinkar:
 fgln&efLye&, drk dh fn'kk es q d l e; bu dko; xbfkka us cgr vPNk
 ; kxnu fn; k FkA ia रामचंद्र शुक्ल ने लिखा है कि “हिन्दुओं और मुसलमानों
 dsfnyka dls vkeu&l keusykdj mudk vtuchi u feVkuptyka ea blgha dfo; ka
 का नाम लेना पड़ेगा। इन्होंने मुसलमान होकर हिन्दुओं की कहानियाँ हिन्दुओं की
 ही बोली में पूरी सहृदयता से कहकर उनके जीवन की मर्मस्पर्शनी अवस्थाओं
 के साथ अपने उदार हृदय का पूर्ण सामंजस्य दिखा दिया।

more for power and riches than for their religious fraternity. Dinkar's observation is worth it. The following comment splinters strict Hindu-Muslim dichotomy:

Muslims did not fight all the battles against the Hindus; they fought among themselves as well, just as Hindus also fought battles against Hindus. Oftentimes, it happened that Hindus allied with Muslims and Muslims supported Hindus against their opponents. In the battle between Babar and Rana Sangha, Sultan Mahmood Lodi and Hassan Khan of Mewat were with Rana Sangha. During their six hundred year rule, Muslims fought more battles with Muslims only. Between 1193 AD and 1526 AD, out of those kings who occupied the throne of Delhi, nineteen Muslim kings were killed not by Hindus but Muslim enemies. ¹⁵⁹ (Translation mine)

Poets beginning with Amir Khusrau and moving on to Kabir, Jayasi, Kutuban, Rahim, Raskhan and Nazeer Akbarabadi took inspiration from the past and present of their contemporary India. They realized the inanity and the stupidity of rigidly adhering to oppositional Hindu-Muslim dichotomy. . Rahim enjoyed the position of 'Wazir Khankhanah' in Akbar's court. Rahim wrote in 'pharsee' and a mixture of Sanskrit and 'khadi boli'. The role of puncturing frozen Hindu-Muslim identities and creating an ideational parity and amalgam between the two has been appreciably performed by Muslim poets writing in Hindi:

These Muslim poets endered themselves to the Hindu populace, so much so that people started admiring them

¹⁵⁹ Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 337. Says Dinkar: मुसलमानों की सभी लड़ाइयाँ हिन्दुओं के ही खिलाफ नहीं थी, वे आपस में भी लड़ते थे, जैसी लड़ाइयाँ हिन्दुओं ने भी हिन्दुओं के खिलाफ लड़ी थी। अनेक ckj , d k Hkh gqvk fd yMkb; ka ea fglhqvka us eq yekuka vkj eq yekuka us हिन्दुओं का साथ दिया। बाबर और राणा सांगा की लड़ाई में सुल्तान महमूद लोदी और मेवात के हसन खाँ राणा सांगा के साथ थे। अपने छह सौ वर्षों के राज्यकाल में मुसलमानों ने ज्यादा लड़ाइयाँ मुसलमानों के ही खिलाफ लड़ीं। 1193 bZ l sydj l u-1526 bZ rd fnYyh ds jkT; &fl gkl u ij tks l Yrku cBj muea l s 19 eq yekuka dh gR; k fglhqv ugh eq fye nd euka ds gkFkka gpbZ Fkha

over and above the Hindu poets.¹⁶⁰(Self-translated)

Shall we say the same about poets like Bulleh Shah, the Sufi poet with Islamic ancestry exuding his mellifluous verses in Punjabi on the soil of Punjab, while disowning both Hindu and Muslim fixities, critiquing the injustice and atrocities of the foreign Mughal aristocracy while advocating the humanitarian principle of universal love!

It is momentous to understand that Sufism, as it entered India through the gateway of Sindh, found a favourable reception with the existing pietistic traditions of India. The mutual exchange of ideas emerged in a fine amalgam, so much so that the generation of Sufi poets like Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif, whose lineage is ascribed far back to the successors of Prophet Mohammad, exhibit a fine amalgam of ideas. This was an indispensable result of their birth and upbringing on the Indian soil, which was replete with the utterances of the *Rig Veda* approximately five thousand years back. The grandeur and sublimity of the river Sindhu which finds an apt description in the *Rig Veda*, harboured and flourished along its bank and seems to have had an indispensable impact on the genius of the Sufi poets of Sindh and Punjab. It was the topography of these landscapes and the existence of vedantic texts which formed the furniture of the psyche of the Indian sub-continent, along with the extant Bhakti tradition which moved from Thiruvalluvar in South India, towards the middle and northern parts of India. This backdrop made up for an effective and favourable reception of Sufism in India. This eclecticism and inclusivity is apparent in seminal Sufi saints like Bulleh Shah's verses, which exhibit an acquaintance and assimilation of ideas from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, Prophet Mohammad, Ram bhakti, Krishna bhakti, *Srimad Bhagwad Gita* and the *Holy Quran*. The central tenet of Bulleh Shah which enables his inclusive sensibility is his endorsement of non-dualism. His Kafi, "hudn kiston aap lukaaida" is a case in point:

Whom do you wish to hide from?

Here you insist on circumcision,

There you are a Mulla calling to prayer. Here you swear
by Rama, the god,

¹⁶⁰ Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 346. The Hindi version reads:

हिन्दी के ये मुसलमान कवि हिन्दू-जनता को इतने प्यारे लगे कि वह उन्हें
हिन्दू कवियों से भी श्रेष्ठ समझने लगे।
इन मुसलमान हरिजनन पर कोटिन हिन्दू वारिये।

A dot on the forehead is imperative there.
 Here you are both kazi and thief,
 There you sit on the pulpit and preach.
 With sword in your hand, you are a warrior here,
 Your own soldiers you have there under siege.
 All around, you are found everywhere,
 You mix your drink yourself and drink.
 I see you here, I see you there,
 I am aware, you do the way, you think.¹⁶¹

The non-dualism at the core of Sufi thought finds parallel in the versification of Indian mystics:

‘That is me’ is ‘I am that’,
 Attributes vary in varying forms.
 Clay is the same,

Takes different shapes

in the potter’s hands.
 Seeing is believing,

¹⁶¹ *Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Karta
 The Punjai version in Devnagri reads:

gqk fdI rla vki yplkbzhk
 gqk fdI rI la vki yplkbzhk\
 fdrs edyala gls oyms gls\
 fdrs jke ngkbz nrs gls
 fdrs I thur etgc nI ns gls
 fdrs eRfIs fryd yxkbzhA
 gqk fdI rla vki yplkbzhk\
 rd ha gqk es I gh fl vkrS gls
 gj I jir uky i NkrS gls
 tkrs gls rls tkrs gls
 dkbz oy Ny gls fo[kkbzhk\
 gqk fdI rla vki yplkbzhk\
 rd ha I Hkuha Hks[kha FkhUns gls
 eSun gj tk rd ha fnl hns gls
 vki e?daj vki s i hlUns gls
 vki s vki rla vki pplkbzhk A
 gqk fdI rla vki yplkbzhk\
 vc rpe fdI I s [kpn dls fNi krs gls
 dgha rpe edyala cus fn[kkbz nrs gls
 dgha jke dh ngkbz nrs I keus vkrS gls
 dgha dgrs gls fd I thur ea gh etgc gS
 vls dgha ekfIs ij fryd yxk, ?nrs gls
 eSus vc dgha rfga I gh I gh I e>k gS
 es rfgd rfgkjh gj I jir ea igpku jgk gh
 bl rjg rpe tkrs gls rls tkrs
 ij fNi usdsfy, dkbz vls Ny di V fn[kkrS
 I Hkh os k Hkhkva ea eps gh fey tkrs gls
 eps gj txg rfga fn[kkbz nrs gls
 rpe [kpn gh 'kjkC gls [kpn gh i hus okys gls
 bl rjg vki gh vi uk fgl kc pprk djsr gkA
 (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay
 aur Path*.2012. p 138)

Ten cows of five colours
 Give milk of one colour.
 Why have doubts, says Kabir?
 That Lord alone pervades
 all the three worlds.¹⁶²

Dr Narayan Prasad Vajpayee in his book *Mahakavi Jayasi, Vedant aur Rahasyawad*, draws a pertinent parallel between Sufi concept of 'fana' and 'baqa' with a parallel citation from *The Bhagwad Geeta*:

One who relinquishes all desires, gets rid of attachment and pride, he approaches the state of eternal peace. Having attained Brahma, such a person never gets distracted by the transient and the evanescent. In the moment of death, he remains firm and attains as well as resides in a state of eternal joy, 'Brahmananda'.¹⁶³ (Translation mine)

L.H.Ajwani couples two essential influences on Indian Sufi poetry. One, the devotional poetry of Fariddudin Attar (*Mantiq-al-Tair*) and the chapter in Jami's *Yusuf Zuleikha*, wherein the Sufistic doctrine is expounded and two, the poetry of Jalal-uddin Rumi (the

¹⁶² Says Kabir: *A Collection of One Hundred and Ten Poems of Kabir*. Trans. Sushila Mahajan. 2003. p 46.

l kge gā k , d l ekū
 dk; k oī xqk vkaufg vka kA
 ekVh , d l dy l d kjk
 बहु विधि भाँडे घड़े कँभारा।
 ip cju nl nfg; s xkb
 , d nW ns[kkS i fr; kbA
 dgS dchj l d k dfj nffj
 त्रिभुवननाथ रह्या भरपूर।

¹⁶³ Narayan Prasad Vajpayee. *Mahakavi Jayasi, Vedant aur Rahasyawad*. 1971. p 26. The original version reads:

fogk; a dkell; % l okli ek' pjfr fuLi'g%
 fueBks fujgdkj% l ' kfluref/xPNfrA
 एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैना प्राप्य विमुह्यति
 fLFkRokL; तन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति॥
 tks i # "k l Ei w kZ dkeukvka dks R; kxdj eerK vksj vga dkj , oaLi'gk jfgr gks
 जाता है, वह शांति को प्राप्त होता है। हे अर्जुन! वह ब्रह्म को प्राप्त होते हुए पुरुष
 dh fLFkfr gS bl dks i klr gkdj og ekfgr ugha gkrk vksj vlrdky ea Hkh
 इसी निष्ठा में स्थित होकर ब्रह्मानन्द को प्राप्त होता है।

Masnavi and the *Poems of Shams Tabriz*), the poetry of the Sant kavis.

Randhari Singh Dinkar in his book *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay* makes a significant point by distinguishing between two aspects of every religion: first, 'shruti' and second, 'smriti'. Dinkar explains it hence:

Shruti is that part of religion from where all religions originate. Smriti is that point in its development where all religions become mutually disjunct and divergent. Shruti brings religion close to the invisible Reality. The process of its 'realization' or actuation leads to the increased prominence of temples, mosques and churches, which feeds the smriti of a religion. ¹⁶⁴
(Translation mine)

Hence, at the point of 'shruti', the quintessential human desire for close approximation to his divine essence is expressed. This pure human impulse is however lost in the religion's journey towards 'smriti', the material monumental icons of religion, the temples and the mosques. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar eulogizes Vedantic thought as focusing on the invisible essence of religion, more so faith:

'Vedant' is a word of Hindu philosophy, but it is not 'Hindutva'. A real vedanti is neither a Hindu, nor Muslim, neither Buddhist, nor Christian. He is simply a good human being. ¹⁶⁵ (Translation mine)

Dinkar recounts the quintessential knowledge of religion which made Ramakrishna Paramhansa teach non-dualistic philosophy to Swami Vivekananda and which led to Vivekananda's dream of the prospective religion of India as one which amalgamates

¹⁶⁴ Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956.p 333.

Jfir /el dk og Hkx gs tga l s l Hkh /el tle yrs gA Lefr /el dk og
रूप है जहाँ पहुँचकर सभी धर्म परस्पर भिन्न हो जाते हैं। अदृश्य okLrfodr l s
संबद्ध होने की इच्छा धर्म का श्रुति-रूप है। इस इच्छा को कार्य का रूप देते
l e; eflnj] efltn vlg fxtk?kja dk egRo nscBuk /el dsLefr&: i dks
c<kok nsuk gA

¹⁶⁵ Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 332. Says Dinkar:

onkUr fglwn'n'kU dk 'kCn t+ j g\$ yfdu og fglUnRo ugha gA l Ppk onkUr
न हिन्दू होता है, न मुसलमान, न बौद्ध न क्रिस्चियन। वह केवल अच्छा आदमी
gkrk gA

Vedantic and Islamic religions. Describing Vedanta as a universal mystical philosophy and not as restricted to Hindu religion.

James Fadiman elaborates upon the concept of Sufism in a manner which reinforces Dinkar's distinction between 'smriti' and 'shruti':

The roots of the tree of religion are founded in religious practices and principles, which focus on outer behaviour. The branches of the tree are mysticism, the spiritual disciplines that extend the individual upward, toward the infinite. The fruit of the tree is the Truth, or God. Sufism is not different from the mysticism at the heart of all religions. Just as a river that passes through many countries is claimed by each as its own is still only a river, all mysticism has the same goal: the direct experience of the Divine.¹⁶⁶

The direct experience of the divine makes up for the 'shruti', a common end for all religions, the different names given to the stream of river as it traverses different geographical terrains is the 'smriti', the distinct nomenclatures and ritualistic performances appended on different religions.

The Sufic concepts of 'fana' and 'baqa' find a close parallel in the Upanishadic concept of 'moksha'. Here is a text worth citation from *Mundaka Upanishad*:

As the flowing rivers in the ocean
Disappear, quitting name and form.
So the knower, being liberated from name and form,
Goes unto the Heavenly Person, higher than the High.
The mystic syllable Om (pranava) is the bow.
The arrow is the soul (atman)
By the undistracted ma, It is to be penetrated,
One should come to be in It, as the arrow

¹⁶⁶ James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds. *Essential Sufism*. 1997.p 2.

In the mark (i.e., Brahman)

All these became one in the highest imperishable Brahma.¹⁶⁷

With this Indian backdrop to the understanding of history, culture and religion, we shall move on to an understanding of Sufism in India, in particular Sindh and Punjab and the manifold influences which gelled together to give rise to the Indian brand of Sufism. Sufis share this aspect with the Vedantist. Kabir upholds his non-dualistic vision of the universe along with his intense critique of religious differences. We have the following verse in the compilation, *Says Kabir: A Collection of One Hundred and Ten Poems of Kabir*:

Tell me, O brother,
Where are the two?
Why foist the illusion
of two on the one?
He created one life,
Did He create two earths?
Religion is one,
Rituals divide in two.
Counting Ram Rahim,
They went away,
One said its mala,
The other swore its tasbi.
Beware, O dunce,
Says Kabir,
The speaker within
is no Hindu, no Muslim.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Ed. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram. Vol 2. 2003. p 149.

¹⁶⁸ *Says Kabir: A Collection of One Hundred and Ten Poems of Kabir*. Trans. Sushila Mahajan. 2003. p 74.

अरे भाई, दोई कहाँ सो मोहि बतावै।

fcfpfg Hkje dk Hkn yxkoAA

tkfu mi kbz jph }S /juha

nhu ,d chp Hkbz djuhaAA

jke jghe tir l f/ xba

mfu ekyk mfu rl ch ybaAA

dgSpch prggjs HkkoAA

cksyugjk rjd u fglnAA

The language of this new class of Bhakti poets approximated close to the understanding of the laymen. The sentiment expressed in these verses was simple as well as appealed to the basic common sense:

Sufism, which travelled from Iran, was not to be restricted to ritual fasting and reading the namaz. Sufis were emancipated thinkers and their objective was to bring people down to the grassroots reality. They taught that external observance of religion retracts humans being away from the actuality of what religion entails. True religion is not about making noise but about attaining serenity in the deepest recesses of the heart. Religion is not about making an uproar, it is not a squabble, it is harmony and peace. Religion is not contention, it is friendship and love.¹⁶⁹

The description reverberates Bulleh Shah's kafi :

Who are you?
Wherefrom have you come?
Where do you go?
The office you are proud of
Is not going to go with you.
You are cruel,
You harass people,
Exploiting others is the way with you.
Your destination is the city of silence
Where the God of death ferries not a few.
You may shout as much as you like

¹⁶⁹ Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 328.

The Hindi text reads:

ईरान से जो सूफी-धर्म भारत पहुँचा, वह रोजा आर नमाज़ से बँधकर चलने वाला धर्म नहीं था। सूफी निर्मुक्त चिंतक थे और उनका उद्देश्य लोगों को डाल से उतार
dj enj dli vlgj ys tkuk FkA oseuŋ; kA dks; g f' k{lk nrs Fksfd /el dscgjh
अनुष्ठानों में फँसकर तुम असली धर्म से दूर हो रहे हो। ----- I Ppk /el
अलग-अलग डालों पर बैठकर कोलाहल मचाने में नहीं, बल्कि, मूल पर पहुँचकर
'kklr gls tkus ea gA /el dkykyg ugha 'kkflr gA /el fookn ugha uhjork gA
धर्म युद्ध नहीं, मैत्री और प्रेम है।

But there alone you will fend your way.
And find Bulleh waiting for you.¹⁷⁰

In the present verse, Bulleh Shah's tone becomes cajoling and compelling, telling the wayward traveller to renounce unnecessary din and clamour and to repudiate self-righteous and self-assertive bantering. The truth of one's existence is to be obtained in the inmost recesses of the heart, nurtured in "the city of silence".

The advent and promulgation of Sufis in Sind and Punjab is to be understood with this background of the Indian psyche and its openness to non-schismatic elements of mysticism, emancipated from narrow communal and dogmatic confines. Theorists like Sir William Jones at the end of the 18th century suggest that Sufism is influenced and derived from the Indian Vedantism, and the practices of the Indian yogis. However, Mirza Kalich Beg and Titus Burkhardt have a more convincing take on the emergence of Sufism. They believe that Sufism originated in Arabia, that its essential elements are an esoteric introspective interpretation of Islamic Quranic exegesis, and then made its way into India.

L.H.Ajwani writes:

This Sufism is a synthesis of ancient Indian wisdom, i.e., Vedanta Yoga- Bhakti, and the Persian brand of Islamic Sufism, as propounded in such Persian classics as Jamis Yusuf Zuleikha, Attar's Mantiq-al-Tair and above all Rumi's Masnavi.¹⁷¹

'Synthesis' theory of Ajwani is more acceptable than the 'derivation' theorists who suggest that Sufism was derived from the ideas of devotional 'bhakti' poets. Accepting the emergence of Sufism on the Indian soil under the impact of the Bhakti cult would turn the deplorable assassination of Mansur al Hallaj, the early Sufi, anachronistic. Killed for his idiosyncratic and intensely liberated Sufi ideas embodied in his famous utterance "I am Truth", Hallaj could not have been killed before Sufi movement began.

¹⁷⁰ Kartar Singh Duggal. *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. p 71.

¹⁷¹ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 44

However, it is very likely that Sufism, itself averse to the schismatic caste and communal divisions must have found like-minded tendency in the Indian movement of "Vedantism-Bhakti" , which had swept over whole of India by the 16th century. Says Ajwani:

“Out of the mingling of Iranian type of Sufism with Indian Vedantism-Bhakti was evolved that peculiar mysticism which is the bedrock of Sindhi literature.”¹⁷²

Instead of Sufism and Indian Vedantism influencing and deriving ideas from one another, we can infer the parallelisms between the two with greater verisimilitude. The ‘unity of Being’ attested to in the Sufi paradigm finds an unequivocal articulation in *The Bhagwad Geeta*. Rumi expresses a sense of identification with the creator hence:

Thou didst contrive this "I" and "we" in order that
Thou mightest play the game of worship with thyself,
That all "I's" and "thou's" should become one soul and
At last should be submerged in the beloved.¹⁷³

Revealing his cosmic form to Arjuna and in an attempt to annihilate Arjuna's anxieties and misgivings about the battle of Kurukshetra, Lord Krishna remarks:

Aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate
Iti matva bhajante mam budha bhava- samanvitah
Mac-citta mad-gata-prana bodhayantah parasparam
Kathayantas ca mam nityam tusyanti ca ramayanti ca
I am the origin of all; from me all things evolve. The
wise know this and adore me with all their heart. With
their minds fixed on Me, with their life absorbed in Me,
enlightening each other and ever speaking of Me, they
are contented and delighted.¹⁷⁴

The eventual merger of the true devotee in the cosmic consciousness of Krishna is promised by the Lord himself:

¹⁷² L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 53.

¹⁷³ James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds. *Essential Sufism*. 1997. p 14.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. p 161.

Mayy eva mana adhatsva mayi buddhim nivesaya

Nivasisyasi mayy eva ata urdhavam na samsayah.

Fix your mind on Me alone, let your thoughts dwell in Me. You will hereafter live in Me alone. Of this there is no doubt. ¹⁷⁵

Sufism deplores mechanical performance of rituals, the laws and the edicts of the prescriptive religious texts. So does vedantic thought. Observance of the rule-book without positing earnest faith in God is meaningless and wasteful.

Asraddhaya hutam dattam tapas taptam krtam ca yat

Asad ity ucyate partha na ca tat pretya na iha

Whatever offering or gift is made, whatever austerity is practiced, whatever ritual is performed, if it is done without faith, it is called 'asad', a falsehood, O Partha. It is of no account here or hereafter. ¹⁷⁶

Sufis are “beyond the fixities and staunch rule-book prescriptions of religious dogmatism.”¹⁷⁷ The oft-cited phrase, 'Sufi la Kufi', means that the Sufi is without a creed. This transcendence of religious dogma is evinced in the acceptance of 'Sama', ecstatic singing and dancing as a means of inducing a trance-like mystical state. In a very simplistic and remarkable conviction, Hiranandani aptly remarks:

Religious faiths, thoughts, concepts and doctrines do influence each other even if the founders of faiths are not contemporaries or even if they belong to distant countries. ¹⁷⁸

Hiranandani avers that Persia, the birth place of Sufism, was amenable to various kinds of religious thoughts like Indian Buddhism, Greek Neo-Platonism, Zoroastrian or Magian worship and Nestorian Christianity and all of these had an impact on Sufism. When Arabs conquered Persia, they spread Islam there. Hence, Hiranandani cogitates that Sufism, which is understood as Islamic mysticism, has its roots deeper in the fabric of pre- Islamic Persia. The hypothesis is all the more convincing that such a long

¹⁷⁵ James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds. *Essential Sufism*. 1997. p 161.

¹⁷⁶ Moosa Raza. *In Search of Oneness*. 2012. p 162.

¹⁷⁷ Popti Hiranandani. *Sindhis: The Secret Treasure*. 1980. p 81.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. p 83.

standing and abiding mystic impulse should spring from and assimilate diverse religious doctrines in an attempt to unearth the meaning and ultimate aim of human existence and human relationship with the Supreme force responsible for his creation.

1.3 Prominent Sufi poets

1.3.1 Early period of Sufism (8th-10th Century): Hasan Basri, Bayazid Bistamof Khorassan (d. 874 A.D.), Junayad of Nehawand (d.910 A.D.), Abu Bakr Shibli of Khorassan, Mansur al Hallaj (b. 858 A.D.)

Some researchers understand the Sufi ideal of life as having its nascent seeds in the *Holy Quran*. The section “Pantheistic Tendencies: Al-Bastami, Al Hallaj and others” in *A History of Islamic philosophy* by Majid Fakhry, aptly discusses that the concepts of religious poverty (‘faqr’), meditation (‘fikr, dhikr’), fortitude (‘sabr’), renunciation (‘zuhd’) and even love of God and His contemplation find an overt register in the Holy Quran. What is iconoclastic and exclusivist is the tendency to go beyond the ritual aspect of the religious law (‘al-Shariah’) and to reach out to a reality (‘Haqiqah’) that thoroughly transcends it.

An important figure in the history of early Sufism is Al Hasan al Basri (d.728). Fakhry expounds:

...[Basri] emphasized ascetic life and the method of reflection (‘fikr’), self-examination (muhasabah) and total submission to God’s will, resulting ultimately in a state of inner contentment (rida). In this state, the tension between the divine and the human state is resolved.¹⁷⁹

Reduced to its basics, Sufis aimed at diluting all conflicts and dualities and aimed at a serene plane of mellifluous oneness with God. In doing so, they repudiated the ritualistic and formalistic element of religion which was meant more to maintain the supremacy of institutional religion than an inner cleansing of the heart and soul. Al-Basri’s mystical ideas disseminated a novel trend of “poverty and devotional

¹⁷⁹ Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 1983. p 264.

piety”¹⁸⁰ through his disciples. Rabiah –al-Adawiyah, (d.801) is an early woman mystic from Basra who lived by the ideals of “poverty, celibacy and other-worldliness”¹⁸¹ prescribed by Al-Basri. Rabiah is also applauded for the introduction of the idea of “divine love (al hubb) in her mystical framework.

Gradually the hub of mystical activity moved from Basra to Baghdad, which gave rise to two great Sufis: al-Muhasibi (d. 857) and al-Junayad (d. 910). Al-Muhasibi’s mysticism rests on two pillars: self-examination (al-muhasabah) and readiness to suffer tribulations in the service of God, the Beloved. Without rejecting the validity of the ritual basis of worship, he insisted on the inward aspect of belief and the virtue of fortitude (al-sabr) in the readiness to suffer. Similarly, Al-Junayad, rationally and pragmatically conscious of the impediments in the attestation of radical mysticism, declared and promoted mystical experience as being circumscribed and operated within the gestalt of the Quranic tradition. Hence, these early Sufis spurn from overt opposition to the orthodox religion and carry on their own quest for a single-minded mystical ascent without overruling the Quranic prescriptions for a religious aspirant. In doing so, al-Junayad defines the conditions of mystical union in clear terms. The first step in Junayad’s mystical framework is:

Man’s intellectual and mystical vocation consists in the progressive apprehension of his own essence as an idea in the divine mind prior to his creation in time...[hence’ there is no abysmal difference between man’s essence and God’s”¹⁸²

In Junayad’s scheme of things, the human world is definitely ephemeral. The divine arena belongs to the category of the binary opposite, that is, the permanent, abiding, unified, undisputed omnipotence. The next step in attaining the requisite unity with the divine Being in the Sufi framework is to overcome the binary distinction between the human and the divine realm. Fakhry explains how the binary opposition between the human and the divine realm is nullified:

¹⁸⁰ Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 1983. p 264.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p 264.

¹⁸² Ibid. p 266.

He [human] is lifted above the precepts of the law and brought so close to God that he is reduced to dust, killed, buried, and later, if it pleases him, resuscitated.¹⁸³

Hence, Junayad first attests to the Quanic version, by isolating the temporal realm from the divine realm and then abrogates this hiatus by reducing human being to nothingness. This serves the purpose of a Sufi: mystical union with the divine font of his life:

These two concepts of isolating the human from the divine and then reduction of man to his original condition of not-being or pre-existence in the mind of God are symptomatic of the gradual maturation and sophistication of Sufism.¹⁸⁴

1.3.2 Middle Period of Sufism (11th-15th Century): Hakim of Sanai (circa 1044-1150 A.D.), Omar Khayyam (1048-1131 A.D.), El Ghazali (c. 1058-1111 A.D.), Farid-ud-din Attar (1145-1221A.D.), Ibn Arabi (1165-1240 A.D.), Jalaludin Rumi (1205-1273 A.D.), Saadi of Shiraz (b. 1208 circa), Hakim Jami (1414-92A.D.)

Hakim of Sanai belonging to late eleventh and early twelfth century was acknowledged by Rumi as his inspiration. His famous works are *The Walled Garden of Truth*, *Dervish Songs* and *Parliament of the Birds*. Idries Shah cites select extracts from Hakim Sanai, which evince a profound understanding of the Sufi approach to life. As regards the lack of necessity of the external accoutrements and incantation and ritualistic elements of religion, Hakim Sanai makes a perspicuous observation:

‘Ha’ and ‘Ho’ are sounds which are of no further use when the knowers really know.¹⁸⁵

Hence, the ritualistic elements and the external acts of prayers and ‘dhikr’ via remembrance and repetition of the name of God are stepping stones meant to tune the mind and the body towards spiritual discipline and the realization of the divine

¹⁸³ Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. 1983. p 266.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p 266.

¹⁸⁵ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 100.

essence. “When the knowers really know” the quintessence of divine truth and attain union with the Beloved, the sounds of ‘Ha’ and ‘Ho’ become secondary.

Al Ghazali is known for his disapproval of pure logic or as Idries Shah calls it “mechanical intellection”¹⁸⁶ as a means of approaching the truth of human life. The worst malaise of human understanding according to Ghazali is ‘conditioning’ and ‘indoctrination’¹⁸⁷. Indoctrination, whether covert or overt, is malicious to human understanding. Overt indoctrination is conscious and open; the receiver accepts and imbibes it consciously. Covert indoctrination happens as a result of habit, accepting the common prevalent beliefs and mindlessly flowing with the current. We may call the latter, herd instinct. Both can be overcome with the preliminary step of realization and identification of ‘indoctrination’ for what it is. Next step is an attempt to resist the mindless acceptance of pre-dominant religious practices and beliefs.

Farid-ud-din Attar is a great Sufi master of the twelfth century of Persian fame. *Manṭiq-uṭ-Ṭayr* (*The Conference of the Birds*) and *Ilāhī-Nāma* (*Memorials of the Saints*) are among his most famous works. A man of great accomplishments, Attar was also a man of sublime principles. Biographical accounts show how Attar refused felicitation from Mongol invaders and preferred to die at the hands of the brutish Genghiz Khan after having disseminated his disciples to a safe place.¹⁸⁸ In his works, Attar elucidates the various stages in the teleological journey of mankind from human being in his journey to find his divine connection. His views emerge quite well from the citations of crucial texts given in Idries Shah’s compilation. Attar endorses the ethic, not that of “eye for an eye”, but that of reciprocating ‘evil’ with ‘good’ because the saint’s essence is to disseminate good and not evil. Idries Shah cites Attar’s endorsement of the stand of Jesus vis-à-vis his slanderer:

Some Israelites reviled Jesus one day as He was
walking through their part of the town.
But he answered by repeating prayers in their name.
Someone said to him:
“you prayed for these men, did you not feel incensed

¹⁸⁶ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 52.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. p 51.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p 62.

against them?”

He answered:

‘I could spend only of what I had in my purse’¹⁸⁹

Here, Attar endorses the saint’s quintessential essence of disseminating ‘good’, irrespective of the intention of the interpolator. Attar also expresses his intense disapproval of worldly wealth. Attar brings home his point through the method of relating fables and stories from the lives of other saints, with moral teachings. Under the heading, “The Five Hundred Gold Pieces”, Attar presents the following example:

One of Junaid’s followers came to Him with a purse
containing five hundred gold pieces.

‘Have you any more money than this?’ asked the Sufi.

‘Yes, I have.’

‘Do you desire more?’

‘Yes, I do.’

‘Then you must keep it, for you are more in need than I;
for I have nothing and desire nothing. You have a great
deal and still desire more’.¹⁹⁰

Attar beautifully demonstrates that there is no end to greed and love of riches. A contented Sufi is better placed than a covetous and a mercenary rich man. At another place, Attar posits his belief in total submission to God. Renunciation of all worldly support and succour is essential to the attainment of the divine Beloved. Another pre-requisite of a true lover as per Attar is that “the true lover finds the light only if, like the candle, he is his own fuel, consuming himself.”¹⁹¹ Both of the afore-mentioned requirements for the attainment of God are demonstrated in Shah Latif’s recounting the folk-tale of the mesmerizing love saga of Sohini and Sahar. Sohini’s abjuration of the last worldly succour, the unbaked earthen pot, and her self-consumption in the fire of absolute and unremitting love for the beloved makes Sasui an infallible and unerring candidate for success in attaining the Beloved. Attar elucidates human misery and the path to union with the divine Beloved and the truth

¹⁸⁹ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 63.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. p 66.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. p 71.

of human life through engaging analogies and parables. He compares human ignorance of his dissociation and alienation from God through a simple analogy:

A man cut down a tree one day.

A Sufi who saw this taking place said:

‘Look at this fresh branch which is full of sap, happy because it does not yet know that it has been cut off. Ignorant of the damage which it has suffered it may be—but it will know in due time. Meanwhile you cannot reason with it.’

This severance, this ignorance, these are the state of man.¹⁹²

Attar further presents human being as a victim of self-incarceration. Guided by intellect and worldly knowledge, he charts his life’s journey on the path to self-interest and ends in despair and meaninglessness in both life and death. That is why the Sufi way endorses the path of total submission towards the divine Beloved. Attar presents an analogy of “the king who divined his future” and failed wretchedly:

A king who was also an astrologer read in his stars that on a certain day and at a particular hour a calamity would overtake him.

He therefore built a house of solid rock and posted numerous guardians outside.

One day, when he was within, he realized that he could still see daylight. He found an opening which he filled up, to prevent misfortune entering. In blocking this door he made himself a prisoner with his own hands’

And because of this the king died.¹⁹³

In a highly profound exegesis of the nature of the divine Beloved and the path to the attainment of God, Attar’s *The Conference of Birds* presents a complete unison between the seeker and the sought. The quest for the divine bird with gilded wings culminates in a moment of introspection where each of the questers sees his own wings turn golden. The quest becomes an inner journey into one’s own sterling self:

¹⁹² Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p72.

¹⁹³ Ibid. p 74.

If you would glimpse the beauty we revere
Look in your heart a looking-glass and see
Reflected there the friend's nobility;
Your Sovereign's glory will illuminate
The palace where He reigns in proper state.
Search for this King within your heart' His soul
Reveals itself in atoms of the whole.
The multitude of forms that masquerade
Throughout the world spring from the a Simourgh's
shade...
The Simourgh's shadow and Himself are one;
Seek them together, twinned in unison.¹⁹⁴

Saadi of Shiraz (b. 1208 c.) laid great emphasis on humility:

A raindrop, dripping from the cloud,
Was ashamed when it saw the sea.
'Who am I where there is a sea?' it said.
When it saw itself with the eye of humility,
A shell nurtured it in its embrace.¹⁹⁵

Incessant and unremitting seeking after the Beloved is central to the attainment of the desired aim:

The sanctuary is in front of you and the thief is behind
you. If you go on you will win; if you sleep, you die.¹⁹⁶

Sufis spurn sleep and cherish the state of wakeful 'tasawuuf' of the divine Beloved:

When a man's sleep is better than his waking—
It is better that he should die.¹⁹⁷

Saadi makes a dig against intellectualism and learning of superficial pedantics hence:

¹⁹⁴ Farid ud-Din Attar. *The Conference of Birds*. Trans. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis. 1984. p 64.

¹⁹⁵ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 83.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p 87.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p 87.

However much you study, you cannot know without action.

A donkey laden with books is neither an intellectual nor a wise man.

Empty of essence, what learning has he—
Whether upon him is firewood or book?¹⁹⁸

Ambition is hampering to humanitarian ethos. There is no limit to worldly desires and acquisitiveness:

Ten dervishes can sleep beneath one blanket; but two kings cannot reign in one land. A devoted man will eat half his bread, and give the other half to dervishes. A ruler may have a realm, but yet plot to overcome the world.¹⁹⁹

Saadi explains that human action coupled with right intention is a necessary justification and validation of one's actions:

One night a king dreamt that he saw a king in paradise and a dervish in hell.

The dreamer exclaimed: 'what is the meaning of this? I should have thought that the positions would be reversed.'

A voice answered: 'The king is in heaven because he respected dervishes. The dervish is in hell because he compromised with kings.'²⁰⁰

Hakim Jami (1414-92 A.D.) of *Yusuf Zuleikha* fame, was a disciple of the Naqshbandi chief, Sadedin Kashgari. Often straight forward and terse, in his ejaculations about the aim of a true mystical aspirant, Jami clarifies the difference between the seeker after truth, and the solicitor of self-exaltation and personal gain:

Seekers there are in plenty: but they are almost all seekers of personal advantage, I can find so very few Seekers after Truth.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 88.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p 91.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p 92

²⁰¹ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 94

Jami deflates the complacency of those who express exultation and elation on their mystical journey:

Do not boast that you have no pride because it is less
visible than an ant's foot on a black stone in a dark night.
And do not think that bringing it out is easy, for it is easier
to extract a mountain from the earth with a needle.²⁰²

Jami speaks about the desired unity of being attained through love:

Love becomes perfect only when it transcends itself—
Becoming one with its object;
Producing Unity of Being.²⁰³

In a beautiful section from his *Yusuf-Zulaikha*, Jami puts forth the doctrine of divine manifestation in the empirical / phenomenal world and how conversely the phenomenal world is a register of the overweening beauty of God:

Wherever Beauty dwells---
Such is its nature and its heritage
From everlasting Beauty, which emerged
From realms of purity to shine upon
The worlds, and all the souls which dwell there
Each speck of matter did he constitute
A mirror causing each one to reflect
The Beauty of his visage. From the rose
Flashed forth his beauty and the nightingale
beholding it, loved madly. From that fire
The candle drew the lustre which beguiles
The moth to immolation.²⁰⁴

Jalaludin Rumi (1205-1273A.D.), born in Balkh in 1205 A.D., expresses great reverence for his teacher Shams Tabrizi. Rumi's major works include *Mathnavi-i-Manavi* (couplets of Inner Meaning), letters (*Maktubat*), table-talk (*Fihi Ma Fihi*), and the *Diwan*. Rumi, like many other eminent Sufi poets, configures his

²⁰² Ibid. p 97

²⁰³ Ibid. p 95

²⁰⁴ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p 19.

verses in an attire which camouflages the inner mystical meaning for a superficial reader as much it reveals the deeper connotations to the ardent quester. This allows space and a certain comfort level to all readers of Sufi poetry. At the level of reader response theory, Rumi allows readers of varied educational and class backgrounds to have their pick of their own desired interpretations:

This technique fulfils the functions of preventing those who are incapable of using the material on a higher level from experimenting effectively with it; allowing those who want poetry to select poetry; giving entertainment to people who want stories; stimulating the intellect in those who prize such experiences.²⁰⁵

The implication is that the reader is enabled to gather the meanings which he is psychologically equipped to gather; this is the multifaceted aspect of Rumi's verses.

In *Masnava-i-Manain*, Rumi says:

The more a man loves, the deeper he penetrates the divine purposes. Love is the astrolabe of heavenly mysteries, the eye-salve which clears the spiritual eye and makes it clairvoyant.²⁰⁶

The man of God transcends normative worldly standards and logic. He dwells in a spatio-temporal as well as discursive framework which defies and blatantly flouts the normative and the commonplace in the worldly sense:

The Man of God is drunken without wine:
The man of God is sated without meat.
... The Man of God is a king beneath a humble cloak:
The man of God is a treasure in a ruin.
... The Man of God is a sea without a shore:
The Man of God rains pearls without a cloud.
The Man of God has a hundred moons and skies:
The Man of God has a hundred sunshines.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p 102.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. p 18.

²⁰⁷ Idries Shah, *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 107.

Here, it seems that the man of God lives in an unreal, imaginary world and yet, not so imaginary, and not so unreal. He is a gnostic whose intuitive faculties enable him to transcend the formalities of religion. The poet lives in a world where the soul converses with the ‘Soul’ of the divine Beloved, where there is no place for “ the pious cloak and turban and the babbling of knowledge about jot and tittle” and

From the bow of desire, the arrow of Gnosis,
Taking straight aim, we have shot at the target.
Thou hast well-said Shams-i-Tabriz
We have cast love glances at the Lord of the Soul.²⁰⁸

1.3.3 Later period (16th -18th century): Shah Hussain (1538-1599 A.D.), Sarmad Kashni (d. 1661), Sultan Bahu (1630-1691), Bulleh Shah (1680-1748 A.D.), Shah Abdul Latif (c.1690-1750 A.D.), Ali Haider (1690-1752), Waris Shah (1730-1790 A.D.)

Shah Hussain (1538-1599), born in Lahore, Pakistan, also popularly called Madho Lal Hussain, is a famous Punjabi Sufi poet, sung and celebrated for his rhythmic kafis, drawing upon the popular themes of Punjabi folk-lore like the eternal love of Heer-Ranjha, and delving deep into the mystical impulses of a profound Sufi.

Ni Mai menoon Khedeyan di gal naa aakh
Ranjhan mera, main Ranjhan di,
Khedeyan noon koodi jhak
Lok janey Heer kamli hoi,
Heeray da var chak
Do not talk of the Khedas to me, mother.
I belong to Ranjha and he belongs to me.
And the Khedas dream idle dreams.
Let the people say, "Heer is crazy;
she has given herself to a cowherd."²⁰⁹

The matter of fact realism in the following verse and the harsh gritty fact of human mortality as well as the journey of human life and death as a lonesome journey, finds a visual presentation in the following kafi:

²⁰⁸ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 1. 2003. p 71.

²⁰⁹ “Madho Lal Husain”. Web. 1st January 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madho_Lal_Hussain>

*Sajjan bin raatan hoiyan whadiyaan
 Ranjha jogi, main jogiani, kamli kar kar sadiyaan
 Maas jhurey jhur pinjer hoye, kadken lagiyaan haddiyaan
 Main ayani niyoonh ki janan, birhon tannawan gadiyaan
 Kahe Husain faqeer sain da, larr tere main lagiyaan
 Main vi jaanaan jhok Ranjhan di, naal mere koi challey
 Pairan paindi, mintaan kardi, jaanaan tan peya ukkaley
 Neen vi dhoonghi, tilla purana, sheehan ney pattan
 malley
 Ranjhan yaar tabeeb sadhendha, main tan dard awalley
 Kahe Hussain faqeer namana, sain sunedha ghalley*

The nights are long without my beloved.
 Since Ranjha became a jogi, I have scarcely been my
 old self; people everywhere call me crazy.
 My young flesh is all wrinkled, my bones are a creaking
 skeleton.
 I was too young to understand love; and now as the
 nights swell and merge into each other,
 I play host to that unkind guest – separation.
 I have to go to Ranjha's hut, will someone go with me?
 I have begged many to accompany me, but I had to set
 out alone.
 The river is deep, and the shaky bridge creaks.
 I am tortured by my wounds, but Ranjha my beloved is
 the doctor who can cure them.
 Only my beloved can bring me comfort.²¹⁰

The human mystic and seeker of the divine Beloved can posit faith only in the eternal, the infinite, the timeless and the everlasting bliss in the embrace of the divine Beloved, Ranjha. The pre-requisite of attaining this eternal embrace is abdication of the world, worldly desires and the physical human self. Reliance on the world and worldly repertoire is to be denounced to cross the hurdles in the path of attainment of the divine Beloved. The tumultuous river can not be crossed with one leg supported by worldly boat of reliance on materialism and the other leg flaunting reliance on the divine Beloved. The divine Beloved demands complete submission. It reminds of the Sindhi folk-tale of Beejal-Rai Diyach. Beejal, the singer of divine melody will not be

²¹⁰ "Madho Lal Husain". Web. 1st January 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madho_Lal_Hussain>

satisfied with anything less than the head of the earthly seeker, King Rai Diyach. Human being has to relinquish his worldly acquisitions completely. The divine being reciprocates absolute submission with eternal bliss. All cacophony and friction, suffering and hankering is replaced by universal harmony and inner tranquillity. The job of a Sufi is accomplished. He gears the human seeker towards the state of eternal joy and divine bliss. Sufi poets like Shah Hussain employ simple analogies drawn from every day life of a lay man and transports the same to a mystical plane, not stopping short of realization of and union with the divine Beloved. Other prominent Sufi poets belonging to this period are Sultan Bahu (1630-1691). Hailing from the Punjab of Pakistan, he belongs to the Qadiri Sufi order. Punjabi Sufi poet Bulleh Shah and Sindhi Sufi poet, Shah Abdul Latif are the doyens of Sufi poetry temporally situated in the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. Ali Haider, Waris Shah and Khwaja Ghulam Farid are near contemporaries, with their own poetic and mystical idioms defining human connection with the divine Beloved. Waris Shah (1722- 1798), belonging to the Chishti order, gained immense acclaim for his love romance *Heer*, elevated to a mystical plane.

1.4 Sufism and Music

The unmitigated coherence between the form and the content of Sufi music creates an aura of harmony leading to release from the problematics of internal as well as external chaos. The form of Sufi music harmonizes notes; the content harmonizes the thoughts of the musician and the auditors and further creates a chain reaction emanating in an intuitive unity and a continuum between the pschoscapes and the landscape. The sense of unity so created further extends itself among the varied consciousnesses otherwise separated by worldly-wise schismatic emotions of jealousy, pride and hatred. Under the mesmerizing spell of Sufi music, these consciousnesses harmonize into a love-intoxicated unity. Jalaludin Rumi endorses music by describing “the abode of love with doors and walls made of music, melodies, and poetry”.²¹¹

L.H.Ajwani remarks that music and dance play the role of transporting human being to a special state of mystical euphoria:

²¹¹ Jurgen Wasim Frembgen. *Nocturnal Music in the Land of the Sufis*. Trans. Jane Ripken. 2012. p 43.

Music and dance... are a powerful means to induce this state of exaltation. There must be renunciation of all worldly desires, there must be renunciation of the next world, renunciation of even Godhead [the idea of God's existence as distinct and separate from the human self], and finally renunciation of renunciation. The individual ego must perish, to be ultimately that I which is the Supreme Being.²¹²

A.K.Brohi, in his introduction to Elsa Kazi's translation of Shah Latif's *Risalo*, cites Carlyle and the high esteem in which the latter held the power of music:

Who is there that, in logical words, can express the effect music has on us? A kind of inarticulate unfathomable speech which leads us to the edge of the Infinite and lets us for a moment gaze into that!²¹³

Music percolates every jot of God's creation. For Rumi, God himself enthuses His creation with music and the perceptive soul partakes of the same:

God picks up the reed-flute world and blows.
 Each note is a need coming through one of us,
 a passion, a longing-pain.
 Remember the lips
 where the wind-breath originated,
 and let your note be clear.
 Don't try to end it.
 Be your note.
 I'll show you how it's enough.
 Go up on the roof at night
 in this city of the soul.
 Let everyone climb on their roofs
 and sing their notes!
 Sing loud!²¹⁴

Shah Latif's *Risalo* composed in different "surs" as he calls them are

²¹² L.H. Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. P 47.

²¹³ A.K. Brohi. "Introduction." *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965.

²¹⁴ *The Essential Rumi*. Trans. Coleman Barks. US: Castle Books, 1996. p 103.

spontaneous mystical enunciations of a heart full of love and devotion for the divine Beloved. Etymologically, the word “sur” comes from the Sanskrit word ‘svara’, meaning ‘a mode of singing’. Different surs go into the making of varied raga compositions. Shah Latif names certain poetic compositions after the names of existing ragas like ‘Sur Kalyan’, ‘Sur Yaman Kalyan’, ‘Sur Sorath’, ‘Sur Asa’, ‘Sur Pirbhati’, ‘Sur Bilaval’, ‘Sur Ramkali’, ‘Sur Sarang’, ‘Sur Surirag’, and ‘Sur Kamud’. Latif accomplishes a specific purpose by giving such names to his poetic sections: he reinforces the thematic message of the *Risalo* with a parallel invocation of the emotions and feelings attached with the nomenclature of a particular ‘sur’. Ragas evoke different ‘rasas’ (emotions) like love (‘Shringaara’), peace (‘shanti’), detachment and melancholic solitude (‘vairagya’).

Each raga is connected with certain emotional and symbolic motifs, for instance, a certain season or mood or time of the day. Further, each raga is evocative of certain feelings in the audiences and are hence transformative in essence. The different surs of the *Risalo* are also evocative of certain feelings and emotions. At the same time, Latif’s surs are named in accordance with the names of central characters and the theme of the poetic sections. As spontaneous articulations of the poet’s mind and imbued with deep feelings, Latif’s Surs serve the purpose of inculcating the same emotions in a receptive mind through a registration of sterling values embedded at the core of the folklore of Sindh. Remarks Ilyas Ishqie in “Surs in Sindhi Music”:

When each of these surs is sung, not only the music but also the content become specific to each Sur. The mode and style of music are invariably related to the emotion-cum-value pattern of the theme and story underlying the sur.²¹⁵

The very first sur, “Sur Kalyan”, registers the same impact which takes place in a state of ecstasy under the spell of divine love. “Sur Kalyan” is named after raga ‘Kalyan’. Raga Kalyan is connected with the description of beauty. Sur “Kalyan” also dwells upon the beatitude of the divine Being and the ineffable power of divine splendour:

The One Creator, the all great;

²¹⁵ Ilyas Ishqie. “Surs in Sindhi Music”. *Rhythms of the Lower Indus*. 1988. pp 59-60.

Lord of the universe—
 The living, the original;
 Ruler with power innate;
 The giver, the sustainer,
 The unique, compassionate;
 This master praise, to Him alone
 Thyself in praise prostrate...
 The generous, who does create
 The universe in pairs...²¹⁶

Raga ‘Yaman Kalyan’ is meant to be sung in the evening time and is evocative of the mood of tranquillity and contentment (‘shaant rasa’). Shah Latif’s sur “Kalyan Yaman” thematically coheres with the evocation of a similar feeling of contentment and shows the path for a peaceful merger of the human soul into the divine Being:

Patience, humility adopt,
 For anger is disease—
 Forbearance bringeth joy and ‘peace’
 If you would understand.²¹⁷

The sur concludes with the assurance of a serene and placid union between the avid seeker and the divine Beloved:

True lovers never will forget
 Their Love divine, until one day
 Their final breath will pass away
 As tearful sigh.²¹⁸

Raga “Sarang”, called the “rain-song” in Elsa Kazi’s translation, celebrates the green verdure of the monsoon season, the breeze and the myriad play of the colours, happiness and prosperity consequent upon a welcome rainpour. The denomination of Hindustani classical raga, raga ‘Brindabani Sarang’ is known to have been created by

²¹⁶ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 31.

²¹⁷ Ibid. p 42.

²¹⁸ Ibid. p 43.

Swami Haridas. His devotional songs sung in raga Sarang are known to have brought Lord Krishna to earth. The raga is evocative of the mystical transformation of earth. Swami Haridas registers his songs with the impact of divine love on the world of nature, transmogrified by the ethereal love between Krishna and his divine consort, Radha. Latif's sur "Sarang" invokes divine benediction on the land of Sindh as well as on the entire world, in the form of the "rich array of rain!"²¹⁹:

O God! May you ever on Sind
Bestow abundance rare;
Beloved! All the world let share
Thy grace, and fruitful be.²²⁰

A soulful singing of sur "Sarang" by a sincere devotee is expected to turn every season into the season of joy and prosperity:

Today too there are hopes of rain,
The clouds are dark and low—
O friends, with monsoons, longing for
The loved one comes again—
I hope the rain will water well
The parched and longing plain...
Beloved come! My life sustain,
All seasons then feel spring.²²¹

For Latif, music is exalted to the supreme position so much so that according to him 'sound' is an embodiment of the divine Being. Latif invests music, in its pristine state with the cosmic music of the spheres and the rhythm of the universe. Invested with the eternal and ethereal power to attain union with the divine Being, in "Sur Sorath", music is held in high esteem:

"Sorath is dead, and all is peace-
Raja pitches his tents;
Music is heard again...the show

²¹⁹ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 94.

²²⁰ Ibid. p 93.

²²¹ Ibid. p 94.

Goes on with merriments—
 Echo sounds song's sweet sentiments...
 Behold, the happy king..."²²²

Sorath epitomizes worldly enticements. Once connection with the ephemeral and the here and now is severed and the King Diyach submits himself to the divine power of Beejal's music, there emerges a moment when the king (the seeker), the musician Beejal and music (the sought after divine melody, the embodiment of the divine Being) become one. Says King Diyach:

O friend, my head is only bone;
 An empty, empty bone—
 If thousand heads my neck would own
 I'll cut them all for thee.

The King's physical death is a prelude to his resuscitation in eternity life-in-death like state, where the happy king will cherish the perennial divine music which will never perish. For Latif, the mystic attains this state of ultimate and consummate union with the divine Being en route music where the song, the listener and the singer unite into an indistinguishable whole:

If I search for my head, the bust is untraceable; searching for the bust, the head becomes impalpable. Hands, wrists and fingers are difficult to find. Those who participate in the marriage ceremony of the bride called unity of being, they are murdered. They find eternal release.²²³

Self-effacement and evanescence of concrete individual identity as distinct from all others is accomplished through the impact of Sufi music. Latif believed in the omnipresence of music. Where Kabir said:

²²² *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 57.

²²³ Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 45. The Sindhi version in Devnagri reads:

सिरू दूँडियाँ धडु न लहाँ, धडु दूँडियाँसिरू नाहि,
 हथ करायूँ आँडियूँ विया कपिजी काहि,
 वहदत जे विहाँई, जे विया से वडिया।
 सिर दूँडता हं तो धड़ नहीं मिलता और धड़ दूँड रहा हूँ तो सिर का पता नहीं
 चलता। हाथ, कलाईयाँ और अंगुलियाँ न मालूम कहाँ कटकर गिर पड़ी
 ग॥ , drk: ih dU; k dsfookgkl o ea tks 'kjhd gkus tkrs g॥ os dRy fd;s
 tkrs g॥ vFkkz~l nk ds fy, eDr gks tkrs g॥

Rabab is a musical Instrument carried by the fakirs. Its musicality adumbrates in all seasons and climes.²²⁴

In a similar vein, Sufi music accompanied by ‘raqs’ (dance) enraptures the participants with the splendour and magnificence of the One. Captivated and mesmerized by divine splendour, the participants get transported into a state exhibited in their ecstatic movements. In this state of close proximity to God, the identity of the human lover merges into the Being of the divine Beloved. The extinction and annihilation of the self is a prelude to the desired union with the divine Being. In the prolific effulgence of the divine presence, the being is purged of its worldly self. In this state, language and body consciousness are rendered supererogatory, and the soul resonates with the permanence of ‘Hu’ (the divine essence of God as the only reality) and ‘Haq’ (Truth).

Latif invests Sindhi folk-stories with mystical intonations. These mystical underpinnings enhance the meanings and associations connected with the denominations of particular surs. There are surs like “Sur Samudi”, “Sur Sasui”, “Sur Leela”, “Sur Mumal and Rano” which are Latif’s own coinages. Here, Instead of strictly searching for an existing ‘raaga’ to name his poetic sections, Latif adds a few more ‘thematic melodies’ (Kazi, 241) from the folk lores of Sindh, under which he had been basking since childhood. Many a time, he modifies the name of a raga like raga ‘Barvo’ and calls his poetic section, “Sur Barvo Sindhi”.

The Sufi practice of audition, ‘Sama’, never had currency in the orthodox Islamic religion. Music and its quality is one aspect of it. The Sufi singer is expected to sing with a pure heart. He must kindle the divine spark and a passionate craving for meeting the divine Beloved before inculcating a similar feeling in the listeners. Ashfaq, a native of Pakistan tells Frembgen about the pre-requisites of a Sufi singer:

Yes, we say that he must develop his qalb-e avaaaz, his
“voice of the heart” and he can only achieve this

²²⁴ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 16.

gkM+Hk; s l fHk fdæjh] ul a Hkbz l c rkæra

रगू थियूँ रबाबु, वजनि वेल सभि कंहिं।

jkc , d ok| fo'k'k gS tks i@djhka ds ikl jgrk gA gj cyk ea ml dk

Loje.My fNMk jgrk gA

through mystical experience and much practice. The “voice of the heart” calls the pilgrims to the graves of the saints...they venerate Lal Shahbaz Qalandar and visit the graves of the famous poet and musician Amir Khusro of Delhi.²²⁵

Further, the sincerity of the auditor’s audition enhances or fails the induction of the mystical state (‘hal’) in the auditor. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram cite Dhu ‘l Nun hence:

Audition is a divine influence (warid al-haqq) which stirs the heart to seek God: those who listen to it spiritually (ba-haqq) attain unto God (tahaqqqa) and those who listen to it sensually (ba nafs) fall into heresy (tazandaqa).²²⁶

Following the lower desires (nafs), also includes remaining beleaguered in unnecessary interpretations and intellectualisms, being judgemental, discussing the pros and cons, connotations and denotations, efficacy and inefficacy of the musical performance. Such men “will be veiled and will have recourse to interpretation (ta’wil).”²²⁷ The open-mindedness and emancipation from narrow communal ethnocentrism which lies at the core of Sufi mysticism has endowed Sufi music and Sufi singers with great acclaim world-wide. Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-1927), the founder of the international Sufi movement, discusses music as the quintessential ingredient of the rhythm of life and of the various art forms and knowledge systems:

To me architecture is music, gardening is music, farming is music, painting is music, poetry is music.²²⁸

Inayat Khan eulogizes Sufi music as an embodiment of universal harmony, and as an analogue to the rhythm working in the cosmos:

...in the beats of the pulse and the heart, in the inhaling and exhaling of the breath, all is the work of rhythm...breath invests as voice, as word, as sound.

²²⁵ Jurgen Wasim Frembgen. *Nocturnal Music in the Land of the Sufis*. Trans. Jane Ripken. 2012. p 55.

²²⁶ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. vol 1. 2003. p 217.

²²⁷ Ibid. p 217

²²⁸ Hazrat Inayat Khan. *The Inner Life*. Web. 20 January 2018. < <http://www.hazrat-inayat-khan.org/>>

And the sound is continually audible, the sound without
and the sound within oneself, and that is music.²²⁹

The ebullience of a true Sufi takes the form of musical enunciation like the ‘qawwali’ or a Sufi performance called ‘Sama’. Qawwali is a flexible and creative mode of spiritual expression where the petitioner puts forth his case in front of the Sufi saints, at the holy dargahs and shrines. The petitioner prays for relief and release from unsurmountable and troublesome circumstances. Famous quawwalis like “dama dum mast Qalandar”, a popularly celebrated version of which is Runa Laila’s sonorous rendition. Leaving behind socially accepted morality and rule-book adherence to literary mysticism, the Qalandars engaged in enraptured states of singing and dancing. The typical accompaniments of a Qalandariyya performance are:

Sindhi caps, chimta (the fire-tongs and rhythm instruments used by Qalandars and Malangs), necklaces, bracelets as well as a small lute and a flower garland in the saint’s hands... a long-haired dervish beating a huge ‘naqqara’ drum...²³⁰

N.A.Baloch in an article “Musical Instruments of the Lower Indus Valley” discusses the instruments typical to the music in Sindh and emphasises their connection with the soil of Sindh, both literally and metaphorically. ‘Borrindo’ is one such instrument made of the soft alluvial clay found in the Indus valley. Baloch describes the borrindo as a hollow clay ball with three to four holes, one somewhat larger, the others smaller but of the same size and arranged in the form of an isosceles triangle. Other basic instruments are ‘yaktaro’, a single stringed instrument. Dilo and Ghagar are made out of baked earthen jars of specific shape, size and thickness and are rhythm producing instruments. Such simple instruments, as they are close to the earth from which they take their origin, are the true companions of the poetic articulations and the folk-narratives of Sindh in its pristine form.

Ameneh Azam Ali in an article called “Dhol Fakir: Sindh’s story Teller” explains how modern life is receding away from the pleasures and treasures of rural life.

²²⁹ Hazrat Inayat Khan. *The Inner Life*. Web. 20 January 2018. < <http://www.hazrat-inayat-khan.org/>>

²³⁰ Jurgen Wasim Frembgen. *The Friends of God: Sufi Saints in Islam*. 2006. p 66.

Technology has robbed us “with one hand of treasures we have taken for granted, while bestowing dubiously seductive gifts with the other”.²³¹ The article eulogizes the existence of a lone figure, “Dhol Fakir, a one-man institution” who mesmerizes the listeners with his recitation of Sindhi kafis:

Dhol Fakir’s kafis are based on folk myths and stories, to which he adds his own details and comments, accompanied only by his ‘yaktaro’, a distinct musical feature of his performance. He is the only one of his kind, the last of the kafi renderers of this particular style, though his tunes have been adapted to the modern style by Abida Parveen.²³²

The description of Dhol Fakir’s style and musical rendering of the kafis is heart-rending. Fakir sings in the style called “sadarangi”²³³, a near to extinction school of music. Ameneh Azam tells us that the word “sadarangi” means ‘evergreen’. It is accompanied by “indigenous instruments like “gharas, yaktaro and brass dish”²³⁴. There are few who appreciate his musical connoisseurship, which seems to many to belong to an ancient past:

...Dhol Fakir sometimes seems a little lonely on the Bhitshah stage, where he performs every year at Latif’s urs. He looks out almost differently towards the anonymous audience, as if implicitly apologizing for the huge gap between them and himself. The total lack of any prima donna-ish arrogance in his performance adds to its charm; one is engulfed by a protective sense of affection for the small figure on the stage who would be so much more comfortable sitting informally under an open sky, swapping musical notes with friends.²³⁵

In another article titled “Soungh Fakirs: Songs of Togetherness”, Ameneh Azam Ali discusses a form of devotional Sindhi song and dance, sung by fakirs from Sindh:

²³¹ Ameneh Azam Ali. “Dhol Fakir: Sindh’s story Teller”. *Rhythms of the Lower Indus*. Ed. Zohra Yusuf. Pakistan: Department of Culture and Tourism, 1998. p 169.

²³² Ibid. pp 170-171.

²³³ Ibid. p 170.

²³⁴ Ibid. p 171.

²³⁵ Ibid. p 171.

The literal translation of the Sindhi word [soun] is “together”, but the implied meanings go beyond togetherness of voice and rhythm, or of the choral unity of the group, beyond even the perfect coordination of the six dancers who never put a foot wrong. It is also the transcendental togetherness induced by the music, the yearning of the Sufi’s heart for union with his murshed, and through devotion, ultimately with God.²³⁶

Ameneh reports the first stage performance of ‘soun’ in 1969 at the Bhitshah Cultural Centre. The group of fakirs who became part of this singing were Fakir Abdul Ghafoor, Hussain Baksh Khadim, Dhol Fakir, Fakir Yar Ali and Inayat Fakir.²³⁷ The description of their electric and power-pack performance is ineffable. Ameneh’s description is worthy of citation:

Saffron yellow, parrot green, shocking pink, electric blue...colours weaving in ceaseless motion. Yaktaro in one hand, chappar in the other...waves of melody moving over a bed of percussive rhythm, as the fakirs’ voices come together in unison, effortlessly, for hours.
 Mein Sufi hoon sarmasta
 Mera kaun pehchaney rasta?
 ...Whatever the source of their inspiration, the same secret spring transmits its ecstasy to the audience, charging them with its energy, filling their heads with the sounds of voice and chappar, dancing and weaving amongst each other in ceaseless motion.²³⁸

The groundedness in their native soil and the belongingness to their native land is central to these Sufi singers. Alok Sud’s article “Smell of the Earth”²³⁹ registers the close rapport between Waddali brothers’s Sufi renditions and their strong roots in the soil of Punjab. Hailing from a small district called ‘Guru ki Wadali’ in Amritsar, Punjab, a village blessed by the Sikh guru , Guru Arjan Dev ji, who himself was a

²³⁶ Amenah Azam Ali. “Soun Fakirs: Songs of Togetherness”. *Rhythms of the Lower Indus*. Ed. Zohra Yusuf. Pakistan: Department of Culture and Tourism, 1998. p 179.

²³⁷ Ibid. p 180.

²³⁸ Amenah Azam Ali. “Soun Fakirs: Songs of Togetherness”. *Rhythms of the Lower Indus*. Ed. Zohra Yusuf. Pakistan: Department of Culture and Tourism, 1998. p 179.

²³⁹ Alok Sud. “Smell of the Earth”. Web. 31st December 2018. <aloksud.blogspot.com/2008/10/smell-of-earth.html. >

great devotee of music, the Waddali brothers belong to the fifth generation of the musical tradition dedicated to singing the spiritual verses of great Sufi saints like Amir Khusro, Sultan Bahu, Waris Shah, Ghulam Farid and Bulleh Shah. The younger of the two Waddali brothers has recently left for his heavenly abode. The duo have had a non-commercial take on music. The two were felicitated with Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1991. Puranchand Waddali was awarded the Padma Shri in 2005 by the Government of India. Their father was a regular singer at the mazaar of Data Ganj Sahib at Lahore. Puranchand Waddali is known to have got wholeheartedly initiated into music as an inspiration from the fair dedicated to Baba Sadiq Shah of the Chishti lineage. Puranchand Waddali also took inspiration from the extant musical renditions of Bulleh Shah, Baba Farid, Amir Khusrau and Sant Kabir. Punjab and its cultural and religious roots have strong connection with music. 'Saranda' is a musical instrument known to have been designed and created by Guru Arjan Dev, which accompanied his chanting of the 'shabads' ('hymns'). 'Rabab' is a musical instrument which accompanied Guru Nanak for the twenty-seven years of his itinerary on earth. Other musical instruments native to the Sikh gurus are 'Jori', 'Sarangi', 'Taus' and 'Dilruba'. Simple stringed hand-made instruments as they are, they give harmonious resonance to the singer's message in its pristine form emanating from the spiritual springs of the singer. Famous Sufi singers like Abida Parveen, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Waheed and Naveed Chishti and Faiz Ali Faiz have earned great acclaim world-wide for their resonating Sufi performances. Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, born in 1901 was a famous quawwali musician of 1940s and 50s. Father of Quawwali musicians Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Farrukh Fateh Ali Khan, he received the Pride of Performance Award in 1990 by the President of Pakistan. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, popularly endowed with the designation "Shahanshah-e-Quawwali", is the father of the famous Sufi singer Rahat Fateh Ali Khan. The tradition of Sufi singing often runs through generations in Punjab and has earned them great acclaim world-wide.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND TO THE EMERGENCE OF SUFISM IN SINDH AND PUNJAB

The existence of multiple narratives cannot be reason enough to desist from the reading and writing of history. Rather, the open spaces and gaps allow for a dialectical, dialogical engagement with alternate possibilities and point of views about a certain spacio- temporal epoch. It is always better than creating a forceful teleology of monolithic, unilinear and closed sense of history, foregrounding the ideology and point of view of one particular hegemonic perspective. The 'prastavana' or introduction to Ramdhari Singh Dinkar's book *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*, presents 'sanskriti' or culture as indispensably connected with the social and the historical facets and the development of culture as a gradual process. Culture is variously defined as follows:

Acquainting oneself with the best enunciations and the most sublime realizations from all over the world is culture.

Culture is the experimentation, fortification or evolution of physical or psychological capabilities and a state emanating therefrom.

It is a cleansing of the mind, behavior and interests.¹
(Translation mine)

History comprises of and displays dual impulses: an urge towards establishment of stability and an urge towards change:

We find two impulses operative in history. One is the tendency towards stability, the other, that of change.

¹ Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p11. Dinkar's Hindi version reads:

'संसार भर में जो सर्वोत्तम बातें जानी या कही गई हैं, उनसे अपने आपको परिचित करना संस्कृति है।'

'संस्कृति शारीरिक या मानसिक शक्तियों का प्रशिक्षण, दृढ़ीकरण या विकास अथवा उनसे mRi lU vOLFk gA'

^; g eu] vlpkj vFlak : fp; lldh परिष्कृति या शुद्धि है।'

These two impulses appear to be mutually antithetical, but in reality they are not. The impulse of stability and persistence carries within it an element of change. Similarly, the impulse towards change carries within it an element of stability.²

The writer aptly registers these dual impulses as constituent of the history of a nation. The desire for status quo and some kind of consistency and stability is natural to the human instinct. Yet, change in the form of violent revolution or gradual evolution is essential to the process of development; though gradual changes are more abiding than drastic ones. An important facet of culture is momentum. Dr. Motilal Jotwani in chapter three of his book *Of Grass and Roots* writes:

The Indian life has flowed along for thousand years, swirling from its own power but also from the powers of new streams that have added to its force.³

Both Dr Jotwani and Ramdhari Singh Dinkar have appreciated the manifold influences on Indian religion and culture and how the syncretic sensibility of the Indian peninsula assimilated various foreign influences:

Many influences- early indigenous religion and influences from later migrants- have added to India's way of life, we can easily call it Hinduism, since it is not a religion but a civilization, Hinduism's inherent momentum...Hinduism unites the worship of many Gods with a belief in a single divine reality.⁴

Dinkar discusses 'Vedanta' as a path. Vedanta is a word descriptive of Hindu philosophy but it is not 'hindutva'. Dinkar affirms that a real vedanti is neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim, nor Buddhist nor Christian. This understanding of the Vedanta coheres well with the spiritualism of Sufi mystics. Dinkar elucidates:

² Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 12. Says Dinkar:
इतिहास के अंदर हम दो सिद्धांतों को काम करते देखते हैं। एक तो सातत्य का सिद्धांत है और दूसरा परिवर्तन का। ये दोनों सिद्धांत परस्पर विरोधी से लगते हैं। *ij ; s fojks/h gš ughā l krR; ds Hkhj Hkh ifjorū dk vā k gā bl h izdkj ifjorū Hkh vius Hkhj l krR; dk dñ vā k fy, jgrk gā*

³ Motilal Jotwani. *Of Grass and Roots*. 1987. p 63

⁴ Ibid. p 63.

Vedanta is definitely a word of Hindu philosophy, but it is not Hindutva. A real Vedanti is neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim, nor a Buddhist, nor a Christian. He is simply a good human being. It is this truth, following which Ramakrishna Paramhansa could not discriminate among religions. This is the dream which inspired Swami Vivekananda to envision Bharat's future religion in which the soul of the Vedanta and body of Islam will find union. From the same vantage point, poet Rabindra Nath Tagore said, "hold on to religion but do away with religions". From Kabir to Malukdas, the great religious legacy established by the saints of Bharat is called by Rama Krishna 'the religion of the spirit', the religion of the soul.⁵

With this backdrop to the understanding of history, culture and religion, we shall move on to an understanding of the orientation and the flowering of Sufism in India, in particular Sindh and Punjab and the manifold influences which gelled together to give rise to the Indian brand of Sufism. In his book *Of Grass and Roots: An Indianist's writings*, Dr. Motilal Jotwani quotes from page 58 of Michael Molly from his book *Experiencing the World's religions: Tradition, Challenge and Change*, published in California by Mayfield publishers, 1999:

Hinduism is more like a family of related beliefs and the name Hinduism, if used to suggest a unified religion, can be misleading...it is like a palace that began as a two room cottage. Over the centuries, wings have been built

⁵ Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 333. Dinkar says:
 onkUr fglUnw'n' kU dk 'kCn t+ j g\$ yfdu og fglUnRo ugha gA l Ppk
 वेदान्ती न हिन्दू होता है, न मुसलमान, न बौद्ध न क्रिस्चियन। वह केवल
 vpNk vkneh glrk gA
 यही वह ज्ञान है जिस पर आरूढ़ होने से श्री रामकृष्ण परमहंस को एक
 /e/ l s nIl js /e/ dk Hkn fn[kkbZ ugha nrk FkA ; gh og Lolu g\$ ft l s
 ifjr gkdj Lokeh foordkulln us dYiuk dh Fkh fd Hkjr dk Hkko /e/
 g\$ ft l e\$ onkUr dk eu v\$ bLyke dk 'kjhj , dkdj gkA ; gh og
 n"V g\$ ft l s ikdj dfo xq jfolnukFk us dgk Fk] /e/ dks idM\$ jgk
 लेकिन धर्मों को छोड़ दो। कबीर से लेकर मलूकदास तक भारत के सभी
 l rka us ft l ije/e/ dk vk[; ku fd; k Fk ml h /e/ dks Mk- राधाकृष्ण
 vkt dh Hk"kk e\$ ^fyhtu vko~fLiFjV* vFkok vkRek dk /e/ dgrs gA*

on it, and now it has countless rooms, stairs, corridors, statues, fountains and gardens. There is something here to please and astonish -- and dismay-- almost everyone.⁶

What is pleasing and astonishing in the old denomination 'Hinduism' is that it is not a referent to the Hindu religion. No! It is a way of life with characteristics of openness and inclusivity. While making such reflections on the preliminary religious base of the Indian sub-continent, we have a feeling that we could make the same statements hold true for Sufism. Sufism emerges as a revolutionary movement in the context of Hindu-Muslim unity. Where at the level of the aristocracy, Mughal rulers from Babur onwards remained harsh and cruel, a novel trend of Hindu-Muslim rapprochement started at the level of laymen:

Rulers and saints remained harsh and the influence of the Mullahs also remained unmodified. But the populace had taken a road distinct from the establishment. People were encouraged by the fact that Sufi saints did not adhere to the policies and ideology of the ruler; neither had they support of the Mullahs.⁷

Dinkar cites the examples of Mansur-al -Hallaj of Iran being hanged by Islamic autocracy and Sarmad being assassinated under the orders of Mughal King Aurangzeb in India. Sufi saint was hence understood as 'baaghi', a rebel figure. Contemporaneously, the Indian psyche was itself under the sway of the tradition of the revolutionary Bhakti poets like Guru Nanak, Raidas, Dhanna, Sundardas, Dadu Dayal, Malukdas, Rajjab and Dharnidas. It is interesting to note that most of these mystical revolutionaries were not Brahmin by birth. Kabirdas himself belonged to low class weaver caste ('*julaha*') and his identity never crystallized as either Hindu or

⁶ Motilal Jotwani. *Of Grass and Roots*. 1987. p 63

⁷ Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 333.. Says Dinkar:
'kkI d vktj I yrkU dBktj ds dBktj gh cus jgs vktj eYyka dk mu ij
i Hkko Hkh oS k gh jgk tS k igys Fkka yfdu turk us I yrur dh uhfr
से भिन्न रह पकड़ ली। लोगों को bl jkg ij vkus dk i kkt kgu bl ckr
I s Hkh feyk fd eYyke I iH I ur I yrur dh uhfr I s ca/s ugha Fktj u
eYyka dk I g; kx gh mUga i klr Fkka

Muslim. The rebelliousness against institutional religion was common to both the Sufi and the Bhakti poets. Dinkar puts it lucidly hence:

Sufism, which reached Bharat from Iran, was not to be restricted within the confines of fasting and reading the namaz. Sufis were free thinkers and their aim was to bring people down to the crux of the matter. They wanted to teach that superficial formalities and rituals drift humanity away from actual religiosity....true religion is not attained by shouting from different branches of a tree; it is realized in reaching the roots in a moment of absolute serenity and devotion. Religion is not about noise, it is about inner peace. Religion is not conflict, it is friendship and love.⁸

Bhakti poets debunked the notion of pre-eminence of either Hindu or Muslim religion in the Hindu and the Muslim minds respectively. Gorakhnath (10th century) who preceded Sant Kabir is noted for the following verse:

Hindu pays offers obeisance to the temple, Muslim pays
deference at the mosque,
But the yogi pays homage to the supreme source,
beyond the temple and the mosque.⁹ (Translation mine)

Culture, whose mane was in the hands of Brahmins, passed into the hands of the low caste after the great revolutionary Sant Kabir. Writes Dinkar:

⁸ Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 328. Dinkar says:

bjku l s tks l i i Oh&/el Hkjr i gचा, वह रोजा और नमाज़ से बँधकर चलने वाला धर्म नहीं था।
सूफी निर्मुक्त चिंतक थे और उनका उद्देश्य लोगों को डाल से उतार कर मूल की ओर ले जाना
था। वे मनुष्यों को यह शिक्षा देते थे कि धर्म के बाहरी अनुष्ठानों में फँसकर तुम असली धर्म से
nj gks jgs glA ----- l Ppk /el vvx&vyx Mkyk ij cBdj dkykg eplus ea ugh
बलिक, मूल पर पहुँचकर शान्त हो जाने में है। धर्म कोलाहल नहीं शान्ति है, धर्म विवाद नहीं,
नीरवता है। धर्म युद्ध नहीं, मैत्री और प्रेम है।

⁹ Ramdhari Singh Dinkar. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 329. Original Hindi version reads:

हिन्दू ध्यावे देहरा, मुसलमान मसीत,
जोगी ध्यावे परम पद, जहाँ देहरा न मसीत।

Kabirdas has been a great revolutionary of Bharat. He is eulogised not just because he made clear to the Hindus and the Muslims that there is no bigger foolishness than fighting on the issue of the temple and the mosque, but also because he unfurled the flag of a novel language as against the elitism of Sanskrit language and the Brahmins.¹⁰ (Translation mine)

A crucial aspect of the revolutionary spirit of these poets was their choice of language which did not attest to the elitism attached with Sanskrit, the language of the select few, instead their language approximated close to the understanding of the laymen. In the context of breaking the Hindu-Muslim ideational freeze, it is interesting to note that there emerged a group of Muslim poets writing in Hindi at this temporal juncture. These poets include Amir Khusrau, Jayasi, Kutuban, Rahim, Raskhan and Nazeer Akbarabadi and Sant Kabir. These poets became the favorites of even the Hindus in India.

These Muslim poets writing in Hindi endeared themselves so much to the Hindu readers that the Hindu readers started considering them superior to the Hindu poets.

The Hindus were enthralled by these Muslim Hindi poets.¹¹ (Translation mine.)

In the present context, we need to understand that a lot of mixing and shuffling was happening as a result of the aftermath of Islamic invasions in India. For instance, there emerged a set of Muslim Sufi poets Indian in origin and having a popular Sufi saint as their teacher. Randhari Singh Dinkar mentions Malik Mohammad Jayasi as their

¹⁰ 'Dinkar' Ramdhari Singh. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 330. Says Dinkar:

कबीरदास भारत के अत्यन्त महान क्रान्तिकारी पुरुष हुए हैं। उनकी
doy bl h ckr ds fy, ugha gs fd mlghaus l kgl i nbd fglh/ka vks
मुसलमानों की आँखों में उँगली डालकर, उन्हें यह समझाया कि मन्दिर और
efltn ds l oky ij >xMus l sc<ej ei[krk dk dkbz vks dke ugha gks
सकता, अपितु, इसलिए भी कि संस्कृत के विरुद्ध उन्होंने Hkkjr ea uohu
भाषा की पताका फहरायी और संस्कृति का जो नेतृत्व ब्राह्मणों के हाथ में
Fkk ml s mlghaus fuEu oxZ ds ylxka ds gkFka ea i gpk fn; ka

¹¹ 'Dinkar' Ramdhari Singh. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 346. Says Dinkar:

fglnh ds ; s ej yeku dfo fglh&turk dks brus l; kjs yxs fd og mlga fglh dfo; ka l s
Hkh JSB l e>us yxk
bu ej yeku gfjtuu ij dkfVu fglh nolkj; A

leader. These poets wrote their love-longings in 'Masnavis' written in Avadhi and used the poetic form 'doha' or 'chaupai'. Jayasi wrote *Padmavat* during the reign of Sher Shah Suri. Kutuban wrote *Mrigavati*. The writing of these texts involved the Indianization of tasawwuf as well as a step towards Hindu-Muslim unity:

These epic poems had made a great contribution in the direction of Hindu-Muslim unity. Pandit Ram Chandra Shulka has written, "These poets get the credit for bringing Hindus and Muslims face to face with each other and dismantling their alienation from one another. Themselves Muslims, they narrate the stories of the Hindus in the language of the Hindus with unmitigated compassion and empathy for the subject."¹² (Translation mine)

Jayasi transcends narrow and restrictive communal confines. He appropriately criticizes Alauddin Khilji as symbolic of 'Maya' and deplores his torturous attitude towards Hindus. Jayasi also expresses his disapproval of Raghavcheta, a character who mocks at the Vedas and the Puranas. And yet, Jayasi evokes Prophet Mohammad and prays to Him at the beginning of the text and never tries to camouflage his own Muslim identity. Such is the cultural matrix of Hindustan within which we shall understand the position, influence and abiding nature of Sufism which traveled all the way from Iran and Baghdad to a land already open to the myriad streaks of foreign invasions and influences, a land which had a firm belief in 'vasudevay Kutumbkam', a reiteration of which is implicit in Shah Abdul Latif's supplication to God to shower divine benediction on Sindh and on the rest of the world in "Sur Sarang":

*Sain! Sadaain karin, Sindhu mathe sukaaru,
Dost, tu dildaar, aalam sabhu aabaad karein.*

¹² 'Dinkar' Ramdhari Singh. *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyay*. 1956. p 334. Says Dinkar: fgln&efLye&, drk dh fn'kk es a d le; bu dko; xbfkka us cgr vPNk ; lxnu fn; k FkA ia रामचंद्र शुक्ल ने लिखा है कि "हिन्दुओं और ed yekuka ds fnyka dks vkeu&l keus ykdj mudk vtuchi u feVkuopyka ea blgha dfo; ka dk uke ysk i Mxka blghaus ed yeku gkdj fglnq/ka dh कहानियाँ हिन्दुओं की ही बोली में पूरी सहृदयता से कहकर उनके जीवन की मर्मस्पर्शिनी अवस्थाओं के साथ अपने उदार हृदय का पूर्ण सामंजस्य fn[kk fn; ka"

Swami! Sadaa Sindhu desh par sukaal karna.

*He mere dildaar dost, sadaa saare aalam ko aabaad karna.*¹³

O God, may ever you on Sind

Bestow abundance rare;

Beloved! All the world let share

Thy grace, and fruitful be.¹⁴

Such is the cosmic consciousness that found like-minded centrifugal spirit in the Sufi paradigm and suffused with the Vedantic thought. Probably, this makes up for the reason for the favorable cultural reception of Sufism in India. While charting such a process of the literary movement which disseminated through the whole of India, we are looking at the cultural and historical momentum of what was then called Hindustan. Further, an analysis of the reception and flowering of Sufism on the native Indian soil would create the teleology of the syncretic Indian sensibility.

What we mean by socio-cultural is the entire complex of knowledge systems, societal mores, religious discourses, arts, dance forms, beliefs reflecting the potentiality and capability of a given people. Culture is predicated upon accomplishments, fulfillments, achievement and execution, through a gesture of human creativity and is physically manifested in arts, architecture, literature, libraries, art galleries and theaters. The cultural aspects of Sindh and Punjab come to the fore through the symbols used by Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah in their verses to elucidate the mystic impulses at the heart of their Sufi philosophy. Human beings have an urge and are capacitated to analyze empirical experiences and to symbolically articulate them for wider understanding.

2.1 History of Sindh: Multiple narratives and the Image of Sindh

History of Sind as recounted in the various annals is one of reiterative pattern of construction, destruction and reconstruction. That seems to be the reason for the resilience of Sindhis, their immense patience and pacifism. The political upheavals and unrest culminated not in disillusionment, anger and frustration in the Sindhi mind,

¹³ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 120.

¹⁴ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 93.

but it constructively resulted in introspection, self- interrogation, and reconstitution of the Sindhi identity. Why are we looking at this history, trying to locate the authentic, the neutral, the unmediated historical narrative? Howsoever hard we try, what about the non-verifiability of the truth value of these narratives. The answer is probably this: what we arrive at in our itinerary through the numerous "half-deserted streets" and "muttering retreats" (T.S.Eliot, "Gerontion") of history is the building up of an aura, and a passing down of a legacy since narratives have an ability to cohere along monuments and memories and affix themselves to the psyche of the succeeding generations. In fact, what remains of history is these mental impressions and persists as live narratives of a lost historical past.

The historical timeline goes as follows. Between 1050 BC to 850 BC, Sindh is understood as being inhabited by a war-like race called the Aryans. Mohan Gehani speculates a positive pacifying influence of the river Sindhu on the Aryans:

...its flow tamed them and filled their heart with serenity,
from which sprang like fountains the accumulated wisdom
of thousands of years in the form of Vedas.¹⁵

The Aryan's adoration of the Sindhu finds a lucid register by Sindhu Kasht, a poet Rishi's composition in *The Rig Veda*:

Unstoppable, irreversible, with strong mighty flow,
mighty Sindhu!
From mountain and plains,
You bring great expanse of water,
Lightening with a roar,
like unchained horse,
Bewitching and beautiful Sindhu.
Sindhu is rich in strong horses,
in chariots and cloth of many designs,
Rich in golden ornaments,
of unmeasured wealth..¹⁶

¹⁵ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 33.

¹⁶ Ibid. p 34.

Gehani aptly points out the similarity between European, Persian and Sanskrit languages and points towards a common past of the people speaking these languages and the possibility of large scale migrations to various lands in search of comfortable topography and in search of food and water. Hence, Sindh was never inhabited by a monolithic race. The concept of "racial purity is a myth" and as Gehani says "a lot of intermingling of blood must have taken place".¹⁷ More than the origin of the Aryans, what is momentous is the world-view fostered by the Aryans and registered in the earliest classics, *The Vedas*.

With the growing complication of life, there arose division of labour. Apart from the privileged classes, the sword wielding kshatriyas and the priestly Brahminical classes, there were the business class Vaishyas and the servant class Shudras. Gradually, these classes became ossified into stringent hereditary and hierarchical compartments. The hierarchical organization of society in the Vedic mold was responsible for growing complacency and corruption in the priestly and aristocratic classes. The detrimental repercussion of such stratification of society led to the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism as movements of protest. Gautama Buddha foregrounded the reality of human existence and emphasis on human action as well. There was no emphasis on the permanence of soul as against the mortal physical self. The initiator of Jain religion, Vardhman Mahavira, laid emphasis on non-violence, simplicity and renunciation, virtues which had taken a backseat in the prominence laid on Vedic ritualism and caste exploitation.

Sindh was invaded by the Arghuns- Turkhans in the 1520s. Persian became the official court language of Sindh and continued to be so until the British conquest of Sindh in 1843. In 705 AD, Al Hajjaj Ibn Khalifa was the viceroy of Khalifa Walid-I. Hajjaj appointed his son in law Mohammad Bin Qasim to attack and plunder Sindh, then under the rule of King Dahir. The gestalt of the encounter between the Sindhis and Arabs is to be understood alongside two factors: one, the native Sindhi ruler's prioritization of self- aggrandizement, and indulgence in petty self- interest; two, their impulse of resistance to foreign invasion debilitated by a certain non- resistance to the foreign invaders. As K.R.Malkani's book *The Sindh Story* brings to our notice, it is

¹⁷ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 35.

ridiculous that Mohammad Bin Qasim, in spite of his tyrannical coercion of thousands of odd men to slavery, rape of Sindhi women, and massacre of the innocent, has been projected as a hero and various industries and places in Sindh have been named after him. Qasim's aim in invading Sindh was territorial gain and expansion. A concomitant of invasion was the spread of Islam. Those who converted to Islam were exempt from paying 'jazia' or protection tax. The letters of Yusuf bin Hajjaj to Mohammad Bin Qasim as produced in *The Chachnamah* read:

Whoever refuses to submit to the power of Islam, let him be killed. It should be your anxiety to extend your conquests from the country of Hind to the limits of China...¹⁸

My distinct orders are that all those who are fighting men (ahl harb) should be assassinated, and their sons and daughters imprisoned and retained as hostages...¹⁹

The projection of a foreign marauder as a hero offers a case study for the possibility and extent of deterioration historical accounts can attempt. The introduction to Malkani's book aptly says,

Historical truth, however, is anathema to regimes.²⁰

The reason for such deliberate distortion and evasion of 'truth' can be the political orientation and convenience of the 'zeit geist' of the particular political regime. It is also determined by the political alignment of the historiographer, for instance, Muslim historiography is often charged with being theocratic and hence challenged. Manan Ahmed in an article "The Long Thirteenth Century of the Chachnama" makes a significant point that a text like *The Chachnama*, composed in 1224-26 approximately, by one Ali Kufi, which is understood as a translation of an earlier text, stands as an absent presence of a historical past with the claim to authentic historiography. Such texts, according to Ahmed pervade the region of Uch as "echoes of textual ghosts", and "continue to hold imaginative sway":

¹⁸ Ali Kufi. *The Chachnama*. Trans. Mirza Kalich Beg. 1900. p 171.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp173-174.

²⁰ K.R. Malkani. *The Sindh Story*. 1984. p xvi.

The persistence of medieval narratives in contemporary lives and spaces is often understood via the stickiness of stories to build environment (the ability of narratives to cohere along monuments, of memories to frame units, of ghost-stories to affix themselves to houses) or to meta-structures such as religious or nationalist.²¹

Hence, the point Manan Ahmed makes is the value of these narratives per se, apart from their truth value. Manan brings up an argument for a “symbiotic relationship” between text and space. This symbiotic relationship works via a two-way process: one, tenacity of textual tropes to stick to the physical spaces and monuments through an act of dissemination and popular acceptance; two, text as building around the hagiographical, real and unreal frozen narratives which surround the physical spatial arena of a place. By the latter, Manan implies how real space triggers, feeds into, incites, and augments the writer's imagination in the service of filling up the gaps, giving a sense of completion and wholeness through the employment of the historian's imagination. If we look at a copy of *The Chachnama: An Ancient History of Sind*, translated from Persian by Mirza Kalichbeg Fredunbeg, published by The Commissioner Press in 1900, the preface by Dayaram Gidumal explains how “the original work in Arabic was composed by the Saikifi family, which settled down at Bakhar.”²² Dayaram Gidumal enumerates the sources of the knowledge compiled by Saikifi family hence:

1. Arab historical lays and ballads
2. Family traditions of the Saikifis, recorded and unrecorded
3. Stories told by individuals whose names were forthcoming
4. Stories traceable to individuals of a certain class, i.e., Brahmans
5. What may be called the flotsam and jetsam of hearsay.²³

Certain memoranda of correspondence between Muhammad Qasim and Hajjaj are also mentioned. What is interesting is that Gidumal mentions, without reservation, the

²¹ Manan Ahmed. “The Long Thirteenth Century of the Chachnamah”. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 49 (2012): 459-491. Web. 27 Nov 2018.

²² Ali Kufi. *The Chachnama*. Trans. Mirza Kalich Beg. 1900. p 7.

²³ Ali Kufi. *The Chachnama*. Trans. Mirza Kalich Beg. 1900. p 7.

inclusion of such constituent categories as 'lays and ballads', 'stories' and 'hearsay'. What is common among all these is that the truth value of all of them is dubitable. The reason behind Gidumal's acceptance of such categories as constituent of the history of a place may be that the past has always been intangible and ambiguous, wrapped in dubiety and equivocality. Hence, it survives and impacts us through the prism of multiple narratives. And yet, intense efforts are made at arriving at the so called 'true history', which is always evasive. However, this does not deter us from delving into the various versions and multiple narratives, often conflictual and contradictory. In the context of Sind, Manan aptly delineates a valid reason for delving into these narratives at cross-roads with each other, on page 460 of his article:

Within these texts are notions of space, sacral and political, history, narratives of self and community, along with references to objects and sites which intertwine geographically, historically, historiographically to produce an idea of Uch.²⁴

Manan mentions four significant historical accounts of Sind: *Chachnama* from 1226, Makhdum Jahaniyah's *Safarnama* from 1350, Mir Muhammad Ma'sum Bhakkari's *Tarikh-i-Masumi* from 1600, and Mir Ali Shir Qana 'i's *Tuhfat-ul-Karim* from 1778 as "texts which put forth an explicit engagement between narratives of the past and the landscape of Uch" (p 460).²⁵

Mohamed Ghaznavi invaded India in 1010 AD. In spite of his success only after the seventeenth attempt, the amount of devastation caused by him can be conjectured. Within a span of twenty seven years, Pal ibn Soomra, a convert to Islam, regained the power of Sindh and Multan. Due to groupism and factionalism and escalating war of succession for Khilafat in the Arab world, Hajjaj and Qasim lost their power positions. However, the Arab interaction with Sindh persisted and Sindhi scholars and doctors won great acclaim in the Kalif's courts. Cultural and intellectual exchange became inevitable. Many Sanskrit books from the fields of medicine,

²⁴ Manan Ahmed. "The Long Thirteenth Century of the Chachnamah". The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 49, 4(2012), pp 459-491. Web. 27 Nov 2018.

²⁵ Ibid.

astronomy, astrology, philosophy, ethics and music were translated into Arabic.²⁶ This cross-cultural interaction resulted in the increasing Muslim population in Sindh. Once the capital of Khilafat was shifted to Damascus, the Khalifa Abdulla Maak wanted the Arab troops to stay in Sindh itself instead of coming back to Damascus. The Arab forces stationed in Sindh comprised of various tribes from various countries like "Qureshi, Siddiqui, Farooqui, Zammimmi, Nazari", which got assimilated into the fabric of Sindhi culture:

...they considered Sindh as their own land, their own country and the magic of Sindhi soil accepted them in its lap".²⁷

From 1010 AD onwards, Sindh is ruled successively by the Soomras (1010AD- 1440 AD), the Sammas (1351 AD- 1519 AD), the Arghuns (1524 AD- 1554 AD), Turkhans (1554 AD- 1591 AD), Mughal Governors in Sindh (1591- 1738 AD), Kalhoras (1700-1784) and Talpurs (1783-1843 AD). The Soomras are understood as Rajputs before the advent of Islam. The origin of Soomras is interesting to understand the myth of racial purity and the meaninglessness of Hindu- Muslim antipathy. Who were the Rajputs? Gehani explains:

Tribes like Lichvis, Huns, Bactrians and Scythians which came and settled in India after the invasion of Alexander, were absorbed into the Indian society and accepted Hindu and Buddhist religions and were accepted into the original fold as belonging to Agni Kula as Rajputs.

With the advent of Islam, under coercion or as a stance of political expediency, they converted to Islam, as "neither they had deep roots in Hinduism or Buddhism"²⁸

The result was a mixing of Hindu-Muslim customs and life-styles. They even switched between Hindu and Muslim names as required. Hence, the Soomra period undercuts Hindu- Muslim dichotomy. Soomra period is also known for its rich treasure- house of

²⁶ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 79.

²⁷ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 84.

²⁸ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 90.

folk literature. These folk narratives form the matrix of Shah Abdul Latif's *Risalo*, for instance, the tale of Dodo Chanesar. It is known that during the reign of the Soomras, great Sufi leaders like Shahbaz Qalandar (d.1272 A.D.) settled in Sindh and during this period Sehwan became the center of Islamic mysticism. Hence, mystical current of nonchalance towards Islamic ritualism and superficial forms of religiosity had triggered in the Soomra period. Consequently the annual urs in Sehwan celebrated at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz is perceived with scepticism about its "unreligious practices".²⁹

After the death of Soomra Bhoongar, Chanesar, the oldest chieftain was chosen as head. However, Chanesar feels undecisive, and expresses his desire to seek his mother's suggestion. This is taken as highly unworthy of the prospective ruler. His brother, Dodo, is made the head. Chanesar, piqued, desires to take revenge from Dodo and invites Allaudin Khilji, the ruler of Delhi to fight with Dodo. Sindh is totally ravaged and Dodo emerges as a brave king who prefers to die for his country. Shah Latif was attracted by another occurrence in the history of Sindh, the incident involving King Umer and a village damsel Maruee. The pure love of a simple woman for her land, her folk, their simple life, connectedness with the soil, and rejection of the opulence of aristocratic life are read as commendable values. This period also saw the unfolding of the story of Sorath and Rai Diyach, the king who kept his word to give his life to the master musician, Bijal's melodious strings. Shah Latif, deeply grounded in the folk tradition of Sindh invests these narratives with mystical connotations and inscribes his mystical instincts deep into the psyche of the common folk, readily and smoothly.

Sammas (1351- 1519 AD) extended their rule for 170 years. The period stands as an epitome of Hindu-Muslim harmony as well as high ideals of social equality and justice for all irrespective of class and caste. The chief exemplar of these values is the fifth Jam ruler Rukun al Din Shah who has been immortalized by Shah Latif. He insisted on marriage to the so-called "low caste" girl of the fisher folk called 'Noori'. He seeks her hand in marriage and gives her the position of Queen Regent in his palace and values her for her virtuous and unpretentious lifestyle as against the prevalent courtly pretensions and extravagancies. Another outstanding ruling figure of

²⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, "Sindhi Literature". *A History of Indian Literature*. Vol VII. Ed. Jan Gonda. 1974. p 4.

Samma dynasty called Jam Nizamuddin alias Jam 'Nando' propagated peace and prosperity and upheld Hindu- Muslim unity. Writes Gehani:

He held discourses of scholars of all faith and participated in those discussions himself thus initiating the practice followed by Akbar the great which later lead to establishment of Din-e-illahi.³⁰

Annemarie Schimmel informs us that the Jam dynasty came to an end in 1509,

When the most enlightened Jam Nizammuddin died after 46 years of peaceful reign; his mousoleum on Makli hill is one of the master-pieces of Hindu-Muslim architecture.³¹

Gehani appreciates the intense Hindu- Muslim harmony so much so that Hindu boys sang at the shrine of Sufi saints and gained applause. However, it is a disgrace that Jam Nando's son Jam Feroze turned out to be a reprobate ruler fond of luxuries and vices. He preferred to disown his loyal guardian Darya Khan and to trust the Arghuns, the descendents of Changiz Khan. This triggered the empowerment of foreign invaders and establishment of the Arghun dynasty (1524 AD-1554 AD). At this point in history, Shah Bilawal Makhdoom, a great Sufi saint was crushed in the oil mill as a deterrent for all those who dared to raise a voice. This was also the time when Qazi Qazan was labeled as a traitor. He was convicted for making Shah Beg Arghun an accomplice to get his own family freed from Arghun imprisonment. The Turkhan dynasty (1554-1591 A.D.) is understood as a dark period in the history of Sindh, marked by tyrannical rulers like Mirza Mohamed Baqi. Power passed on from the Turkhan dynasty over to Mughal rule. Akbar extracted power from the last Turkhan ruler, Mirza Jani Beg.

The period of the Mughal governors of Sindh stretches from 1591AD to 1738 AD. During this period of 148 years, 67 Mughal governors were appointed in Sindh. Mirza Jani Beg was treated kindly at Akbar's court and was won over by him and appointed governor of Sindh. Jani Beg's daughter was married to Akbar's grandson (Khusru, son of Jahangir). Mirza Ghazi Beg succeeded Jani Beg as governor of Sindh.

³⁰ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 95.

³¹ Annemarie Schimmel, "Sindhi Literature". *A History of Indian Literature*. Vol VII. Ed. Jan Gonda. 1974. p 4.

In spite of the well-meaning kings like Akbar, the Mughal period in Sindh is marked by court conspiracies and local warfare due to clash of interests and a conflict for power. This was the period when Mirza Ghazi Khan is known to have been strangled to death by his own relatives. The period of the thirty-seventh governor of Sindh saw the martyrdom of Sufi saint Shah Inayat. The rising popularity and high principles of Shah Inayat invoked jealousy of the pirs as well as jagirdars of the time. Shah Inayat spoke logically and convincingly for the welfare of the poor peasant, evoking the idea that the land of God should belong to the tiller and not to the intermediary zamindar:

Thus he struck at the very root of economic and political structure of the society...He decreed that the land is like mother, whosoever tills it is entitled to its bounty.³²

Jagirdars and Pirs could not accept the novelty of the idea and the immense popularity of Shah Inayat. When Yar Mohamed Abbassi attacked Jhok Sharif, Shah Inayat's followers, in order to warn their sleeping fighters raised the cry, "Allah-o-Akbar" (God is Great). Those who raised this cry were identified and massacred. Hence, it is deplorable that "even during Muslim rule so many people paid with their life for raising the cry "Allah-o-Akbar". Mughal forces took resort to treachery, invited Shah Inayat to come to Thatta to resolve the matter and deviously beheaded him on 7th Jan, 1718 AD. Inayat's followers were silenced with the official dictum that those who raised the slogan "Allah-o-Akbar" should be beheaded. It is quite ironical that massacre should be promulgated by the Mughals for pronouncing the name "Akbar", the promoter of 'din-i-illahi'. In 1701, as the Mughal empire moved to its decline, local chieftain Mian Yar Mohamed was made governor of Sindh. In 1740, Nadir Shah Abdali attacked Sindh. After his death Ahmad Shah Durrani invaded Sindh and the land of Sindh became witness to gory acts of man-slaughter and gratuitous blood-shed.

Historiographers like Gehani have criticised in the most stringent terms the traitors of Sindh and applauded with equal zest the exemplars of absolute fealty to the land of Sindh. A negative and superstitious image of Sindh is created in Sindh's confrontation with Mohamed Bin Qasim. While Qasim, a young boy of eighteen, armed

³² Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 10.

with the fiercest and inimitable select clans from Iraq and Syria, deployed all his powers which were a conglomerate of mind play and brute power, he conveniently and happily acquired the fort of Debal, Nirunkot and the fort of Sehwan. Having been informed about the superstition of the inmates of the fort of Debal that as long as the minaret of the temple remained intact, no harm will come to them, Qasim demolished the minaret of the temple and brought down the flag as per the account of the *Chachnamah*:

The deed was soon accomplished. Steeped in superstition the Sindhi population of the fort surrendered without any resistance. Thus started the first leg of the conquest of Sindh.³³

At Nironkot, the Buddhist governor entered into a secret pact with the Arab army of Qasim. The former delayed the capitulation of the fort for five days for the sake of verisimilitude, after which the fort was surrendered with much propriety. The fort of Sehwan was acquired with the help of the governor of Nironkot. In contrast to such cowardly acts of betrayal, there exist examples of valiant battles fought by lonesome figures like King Dahir. The image of Sindh is inextricably connected with its history, its folk-narratives and its art forms.

2.2 Socio- Cultural background of Sindh

2.2.1 Topography of Sindh

Sindh has been divided into five parts: Siro (north), Vicholo (central), Laar (south coastal), Kochistan (Mountaneous), Thar (Desert). The river Sindhu flows through Siro, Vicholo and Laar. Popti Hiranandani in her book *Sindh: The Sacred Treasure*, calls Sindh "the oldest civilization on earth" and clarifies that "the boundaries of Sind of olden times comprised and included parts of the present Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Afghanistan, the Las forests of Balochistan, the whole of Kutch and the North of Kathiawar".³⁴ While Richard Burton in 1851 calls it " the unhappy valley" in the title of his book *Scinde, or the Unhappy Valley*, it is important to note that howsoever uncomfortable a person foreign to this place may feel due to the contingencies of

³³ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 72.

³⁴ Popti Hiranandani. *Sindh: The Secret Treasure*. 1980. p 1.

weather conditions, the inmates adapt and react positively to these contingencies and "develop a synthetic power which keeps them physically fit and spiritually alive."³⁵ The synthetic powers of its inmates and their adaptive capabilities result in the syncretic sensibility of its poets and bards, whose poetry is a fine amalgam of Hindu philosophy and Muslim thought:

In this land-- where many races of the world came by sea from the south and by road from the north and where great religions and philosophies interacted-- grew up generations of poets whose works are sublime in content. Shah Abdul Latif is easily the greatest of them all, in Sindh.³⁶

We find that the varied land forms and the topography has been enabling in the formation of the folk narratives of Sindh. Sasui has to cross the formidable mountains to reach her Marui, Sohni has to overcome the daunting river currents to reach her Sahar. The folk narratives of Sindh are a testimony to the vital role played by the topography of Sindh in making the quest of the human seeker rigorous and taxing. Greater the impediment, more bountiful the credit earned by Latif's heroines. The topography of Sindh adds validity and verisimilitude to the quest and greater applause to the seeker after truth.

2.2.2 People

Civilization of the Indus valley, as evinced through the excavations in Sindh undertaken in 1922-23, revealed the existence of a highly sophisticated and well planned civilization. The civilization site was named Mohen-jo-Daro, the mound of the dead built 5000 years ago:

It has burnt brick houses, roads cutting at 90 degrees being horizontal and perpendicular in straight line and adequate drainage and water system... Houses are spacious and well ventilated. Gypsum and lime mixture has been used to plaster the walls.³⁷

³⁵ Motilal Jotwani. *Shah Abdul Latif: His Life and Work*. 1975. p 12.

³⁶ Ibid. p 13.

³⁷ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 27.

Popti Hiranandani qualifies the same research from a verse from the first chapter of the *Rigveda*:

Oh Sindhu!
When the earth was barren
And people unclothed
Men, on your banks
Processed the ropes of Piesh
And spun cotton.³⁸

Dr. Aruna Jethwani says that "the river Sindhu is not only a river; it is the flowing waters of deep spirituality."³⁹ It is said that ancient rishis composed the Rig Veda on the banks of river Sindhu. The atmosphere reverberated with the Vedic hymns recited in their soulful voice. Posterity cherished the mystical atmosphere around the banks of the Sindhu and innumerable sages and bhaktas found a haven in the midst of this pristine beauty of nature. The spiritual aura of the revered Sindhu accommodated and provided food for spiritual thought to mystics belonging to varied mystical paradigms and to the Sufis as well.

The people inhabiting the banks of the Sindhu river were highly connected with the rhythm of nature. Popti Hiranandani draws a significant connection between the words Indus and India and the Sanskrit word Indu meaning the moon. The people of Sindh have had a deep connection with the vibrant river Sindhu making an incessant unflinching journey from the Himalayas to the Arabian Sea. Sindhis also connect deeply with the movement of the moon. The connection between the movement of the moon and the water is established by science itself. The Sindhis create a deeper psychological connection. Sindhis follow the lunar year. The first day of the month of 'Chaitra' is the New Year day for Sindhis. Post-partition, the All India Sindhi Boli and Sahitya Sabha announced the celebration of Chetti Chand as epitomizing the solidarity of the Sindhi community. Celebrations are accompanied by the vibrant dance form of Sindh called 'Chejja'. The 'dholak' and the 'shahnai' are instrumental in giving music to the dance performance.

³⁸ Popti Hiranandani. *Sindhis: The Secret Treasure*. 1980. p 74.

³⁹ Aruna Jethwani. *The Sufi: Shah Abdul Latif*. 2013. p19.

The Sindhi people have been a peaceful group. The excavations in Sindh undertaken in 1922-23 at the site of Mohen-jodaro evince a complete lack of weapons of war. People lived in harmony since:

The river Sindhu provided food in abundance... It is
insecurity and empty stomach which leads to warfare.
The free time gave rise to the pursuit of fine arts.⁴⁰

Known for their brilliance in trade and commerce, the influence of the religious, social and cultural practices of the Indus and the Aryan people made up for the unique combination of dexterity in arts of both the civilizations in the Sindhi people:

Sindhis have combined the arts of both the civilizations,
viz., agriculture and trade. Centuries ago cotton was
produced in Sind. Sind exported its textiles to far off lands
and was nicknamed Suvasa (the land of cotton cloth).⁴¹

Sindhis who carried out textile business are called 'Sindhuvarkis'. Due to their frequent practice of crossing the river Sindhu and the Arabian Sea to export textiles in other parts of the world, the river cult and the river Sindhu hold a place of immense momentousness for them. A Sindhuvarki's wife would devoutly light lamps and pray and sing soulful songs to the water-God for the safe return of her husband. Hiranandani informs us about the presence of the temple called 'Sindhu Bella' in Sukkur, in the middle of water where an idol of the Zindah Peer is placed. Here, Sindhi women regularly offer prayers and sing songs in praise of the river-deity.⁴² These aspects of Sindhi culture surface in the mystical enunciations of Shah Abdul Latif and are invested with mystical connotations by the saint poet.

2.2.3 Language

The eight dialects of Sindhi language are Lari, Thari, Lasi, Kuchi, Kochistani, Memani, Saraiki and Vicholi. Sairiki, spoken in the north of Sind, has been the medium of the compositions of Sindhi poets like Sachal, Dalpat, Bedil and Bekas. Shikarpuri is a variant of Sairiki dialect and is used by the Vedantic Sufi poet, Sami.

⁴⁰ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 29.

⁴¹ Popti Hiranandani. *Sindhis: The Secret Treasure*. 1980. p 3.

⁴² Ibid. p 78.

Vicholi, as the word etymologically suggests, is spoken in middle Sindh and Lari is spoken in lower Sindh and has been used by Shah Abdul Latif. Thari is spoken in the eastern parts of Sindh; Lasi, in the Las forest of Balochistan; Memani by the Memons or Khojas; Kohistani, by the people of Kohistan.

2.2.4 Arts

Seals have been the most striking artifacts found during the excavations conducted at the site of Mohen-jo-Daro like the 'swastika', the significance of which has been variously interpreted as follows:

Some writers believe it to be the emblem of the Sun God, of the chariot of Agni, the fire God of Indra, the rain God of the sky, the sky God, and finally the deity of all deities, the Great God-- the Maker and the Ruler of the Universe.⁴³

Another legacy of the Sindhu valley civilization is understood as 'OM', the revered mantra and the auspicious salutation relevant to the present day. Ram Panjwani, in his book *Sindh: Land of Hope and Glory*, interprets 'OM' as a sentiment inscribed in the expression 'Tat tvam Asi' meaning 'That thou Art'. It is a bestowal of the divine element in all human forms, that "there is God in you and to Him and to you we salute".⁴⁴

The highly sophisticated art of jewellery making found during these excavations was well appreciated by Sir John Marshall. Writes Gehani adduces John Marshall's comments on observing the gold ornaments:

"The Gold ornaments are so well finished and so highly polished that they might have come out of Bond Street Jeweller rather than a pre- historic house of 5000 years ago." Feb 27, 1926.⁴⁵

The excavations revealed existence of an undeciphered pictographic script as well as pottery with intricate art work. This was the highly sophisticated civilization which

⁴³ Ram Amarlal Panjwani and Savitri Kotumal Mansukhani. *Sindh: Land of Hope and Glory*. 2002. pp 27-28.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p 28.

⁴⁵ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 28.

was found at the site of Mohanjo Daro, which existed between 3000 BC and 1000 BC. Hence, a highly sophisticated planned city has been conjectured.

2.2.5 Religion

Derryl N. Macleans' book *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, documents the prominence of Buddhists in lower Sindh. Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen Tsang has documented the existence of "460 Buddhist monasteries with 26,000 monks in Upper Sindh."⁴⁶ Brahmins, Of course, occupied another potent force in Sind. There is a reference in the *Chachnamah* about how a native of Brahmanabad remarks:

The prosperity of this country is due to the Brahmins (barahimah). They are our scholars (ulama) and sages (hukama). All our important rituals from marriage to mourning are performed through their mediation.⁴⁷

The *Chachnama* refers to Brahmin priestcraft, widow- burning, the veneration of the cow, Brahminical rituals such as cremation and caste related concerns for purity and pollution.⁴⁸ Two hundred and seventy three Hindu temples are reported by Hiuen Tsang in Sindh, and Macleans writes:

Of these one was the famous Sun Temple of Multan, 37 are inter-sectarian and the remaining 235 belong to Pasupati Saivites⁴⁹

Hinglaj temple situated eighty miles west of the Indus delta enjoys a prominent place as one of the Shakti pithas where the severed limbs of Shiva's consort fell when she gave herself to fire. Shah Abdul Latif is known to have visited Hingula Devi in one of his itineraries in the company of the wandering yogis, for whom he reserves immense praise in his *Risalo*. In the *Chachnamah*, Chach declares that he has memorized all the four Vedas, gains prominent position as the minister of Rai Sahasi due to his elocution and intelligence at conversation. The *Chachnama* was written by Kazi Ismail, who was appointed the first Kazi of Alor by Muhammad

⁴⁶ Derryl N. Macleans. *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*. 1989. p 7.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p 13.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p 13.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p 14.

Kazim after the conquest of Sindh.

Archeologists have suggested the worship of mother goddess, Lord Shiva as Shiva Linga and worship of water-god as well. The latter emerges as a reverence and a tribute to Jhoolelal and Zindah Pir of the Sindhis. Sindhis were very close to the rhythm of nature. Gehani writes:

They used to worship some trees and animals. It appears that the ancient people of Sindh even in those times were quite alive to the importance of trees and affinity with nature.⁵⁰

This fact gains verisimilitude via the legacy of both the Indus valley civilization and the Vedic period of the Aryans:

The people of the former civilizations were worshipers of Phallus, Shiva ...The Vedic period dwellers worshiped the elements of nature.⁵¹

There is a strain of positive cultural influence of Arab invasions. In the year 711-12, an Umayyad General, Muhammad Qasim from present day Saudi Arabia, conquered Sindh and Multan along the river Indus. Qasim's intervention made way for later Muslim conquests. The Indian attraction for Arabs was its vast wealth and a desire to spread Islam. It has also been suggested that the Arab invasion was triggered by some instigation from Sindh. There are references, in historical annals, to the King of Ceylon sending gifts to the Khalifa of Baghdad and to Hajjaj, Mohammad bin Qasim's minister. Due to lack of compensation from the extant Sindhi ruler King Dahir, Hajjaj launched a military campaign against Sindh. King Dahir's death compelled Queen Rani Bai to take arms and then perform 'jauhar'. Mohammad bin-Qasim captured towns like Rewar, Brahmanabad, Multan, Sind and Alor. However, due to the stronghold of the Rajput rulers of the North and the East, the Arabs could not spread beyond Multan and Sindh. The aftermath of these political events is understood as the indispensable creation of Hindu-Muslim interface which, for the laity, is confrontational and contestant, and at the same time, mutually enriching and

⁵⁰ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 29.

⁵¹ Popti Hiranandani. *Sindhis: The Secret Treasure*.1980. p 3.

enlivening. Many Indian scholars, physicians and architects were invited to Baghdad and honored for expertise in their fields and the Islamic civilization and religion came into contact with the ancient Vedic civilization. I quote Mohan Gehani's observation:

Many Sindhi scholars found place in the court of Arab Kalifs and made their name there....Imama Aorazi bin Abdul Rehman, a slave from Sindh, is a leader of 'faqā' creed of Islam. He has many followers in Syria and Indulus (modern day Spain). Abu Atta Sindhi acquired the title of 'Qadir al Kalam'. Poet Abu Fallah Mansoori, also a slave from Sindh, composed the immortal song, "song of the Country".⁵²

Sarah F.D.Ansari has a veritable and a positive take on Muslim intervention in India. Without effacing conflictual and confrontational problematics of Hindu-Muslim dichotomy, Ansari gives examples to substantiate how this interface also became a site of cultural and religious syncretism. This religious interface triggered not just mutual tolerance, but assimilation and absorption of the indigenous local beliefs and traditions into the Muslim practice, resulting in an amicable and non-conflictual religious framework. This is well exemplified in the overlapping of Khwaja Khijr, the native Hindu patron saint of waterways and travelers with Zindah Pir, in the Islamic tradition in Sindh. His shrine at Sukkur is revered by both Hindu and Muslim devotees. The Mujawars or keepers of the shrine are also both Hindus and Muslims.

The greater effort at proselytization was made by Ismaili missionaries, but they could not sustain popularity on the Sindhi soil for long. So far as pirs and Sufi poets are concerned, only those remained and sustained interest who believed in religious tolerance. The Suhrawardi Sufis, in the 16th Century, had Hindu following due to faith in 'wahadat al wujud'. However, due to the disfavor of Sindhi Arghuns, the Suhrawardis lost their impact in Sindh. The abiding impact of Sufis in Sindh was that of the Qadiris. Its exponents were Sheikh Yusuf al Din (1430 c.) and Sheikh Muhammad Gawth (1482 c.) Qadiri centres in Sindh were Bukkur, Nasarpur, Tatta and Badin. Sehwan produced the famous Qadiri Sufi, Hazrat Miyan Mir. The

⁵² Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*.1998. p 79.

Naqshbandi order, whose emphatic proponent was Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, became notorious for his opposition to 'Wahad al wujud' or Unity of Being. The concept of 'unity of being' was considered as a serious jolt to Islamic orthodoxy. Even the famous Naqshbandi saints like Makdum Aman of Luari and his disciple Shaikh Abdur Rahim Girori (d. 1778 A.D.) became alienated from the mainstream Naqshbandi activities. Gradually, with time, Sufi orders and their thought processes overlapped and were difficult to remain in separate self-contained compartments. Individuals were initiated into several orders at the same time:

Towns and cities such as Rohri, Sehwan, Nasarpur and Tatta became leading centres of more than one Silsila, often claiming to have 'sawa lakh' or 125,000 saints buried in their graveyards.⁵³

With time, an obverse and corrupted religious practice began within the Sufi cult and with the institutionalization of the Sufi saints, the Dargah became symbolic of religious intercession between murids and God and a close rapport with the divine force could be achieved by approaching the deputed 'sajjada nashins'. Ansari cites from page 141 of J. Spencer Trimingham's *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, published by Oxford in 1971:

Sajjada nashins made access to the saints possible even when they were not men of the same spiritual calibre as their forbears, for saintliness became increasingly dissociated with personal piety.⁵⁴

Jhulelal is the water-God of the Sindhis. The land of Sindh has been understood as having risen from the sea. Mohan Gehani cites Prof. Pithawala's remarks:

...as nature provides the milk for the child in the breast of the mother before the birth of the child, the river Sindhu was already in existence before the emergence of Sindh.⁵⁵

⁵³ Sarah F.D. Ansari. *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sind, 1843-1947*. 1992. p 23.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p 23.

⁵⁵ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 24.

It is a reference to the pre-existence of the Sindhu river even before the great Himalyan upheavals and the creation of the landmass of Sindh. The significance of the river Indus can also be conjectured by the manifold nomenclatures attributed to it:

To the pathans it is Abbasin, the father of rivers, to the Punjabis it is the source of fearless and adventurous romance and to the people of Sind it is Mehran, the great ocean.⁵⁶

Sindhis offer oblations and pay homage to the water god called Jhulelal, also addressed affectionately as Doolahlal. 'Dooloho' means bride-groom. The endearing denomination 'Jhulelal' refers to the water-god's swinging along with the movement of the waves. Writes Hiranandani:

But the name of the water god is Uderolal with us. The word is significantly connected with the Sanskrit word 'Udaka' meaning water. We believe him to be Zindah Peer (the living saint/God). He is also Varuna-dev, the Vedic god and rides on Palo fish.⁵⁷

However, on the human front, fraudulence and duplicity was prevalent among certain sections of the Hindus as much as the Muslims. *A Social and Cultural History of Sind: Based on the accounts of the European Travellers who Visited Sind*, by Mubarak Ali published in 1987 by the Department of History, University of Sind, is an interesting reading which gives accounts of the Italian, Spanish, German, French and English travelers. The accounts vary according to the writer's pursuits, vocations and interests. The book cites Richard Burton's account of Sindhi Brahmins:

The Brahman in Sinde shaves his head leaving a single lock upon the pool; he removes the beard, and induces the moustaches to droop heavily over his mouth, in order to distinguish them from the hairy honors of the Moslem's lip. Upon his forehead he places a horizontal perpendicular mark indifferently. His dress is generally that of a common Sahukar, or trader, -- that is to say, a

⁵⁶ Popti Hiranandani. *Sindhis: The Secret Treasure*. 1980. p 75.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p 77.

white or red turban, a cotton coat...slipper of anything but leather. In his hand is a sandalwood rosary of twenty-seven grains; and constant habit had endowed him with the power of muttering and telling his beads mechanically. (R. Burton, *Unhappy Valley of Sind*, I, 236-37)⁵⁸

The incompetence and pomposity and insincerity of the government officials of the Muslim rulers are documented. These officers are the 'respectable' body of Hindus of Sind. A class appointed and created by the Mughal rulers, they are "distinguished from their fellow regionalists by their attire":

The bigotry of the court forbade them to shave their beards, or to wear turbans: they lost the right of placing the tilak on forehead, and they were compelled to trim the long moustaches with which the Hindoo loves to garnish the upper lip."⁵⁹

This is Burton's tongue-in-cheek satire on the 'Hindoo' affectation of authority (flaunting the same through long mustaches) and religiosity (flanking a prominent tilak), and an equal promptness in dispelling both the signs as a stance of political convenience. This is an outsider's view of Sind, which can be understood as having greater objectivity than an insider's perspective would have. Yet, coming from the vantage point of the colonialist or, as we may say, occidental view of the orient, it can have another set of reasons for being prejudiced and bigoted against the so called barbaric East. Mubarak Ali further cites from T.Posten's "Personal Observations on Sind":

... Lazy Seyuds and worthless professors of religious zeal are patronized in Sind to a degree elsewhere unknown: they are essentially a priest-ridden people; and an earlier writer in describing their character, says, "that the Scindian shows no liberty but in feeding lazy Seyuds, no zeal but in propagating the faith, no spirit, but in celebrating the ede (festival), and no taste but in ornamenting the tombs"⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Mubarak Ali. *A Social and Cultural History of Sind*. 1987. p 94.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p 90.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p 96.

Even if Posten's account is not to be relied upon in absolute terms, yet it is this kind of dilettantism which comes under the critique of Sufi poets under consideration. Hence, there's a need to reiterate that the Sufi dissidence from official religiosity is less a deviation from religious prescriptions, and more a rebuke to fake, pompous, superficial practices by the detractors of religion, who attempt to fool others, and more so themselves by their grandiloquent façade. Alongside these narratives, there is the testimony of Alexander's visit to Sindh between 329-324 BC. After subjugating Iran, Egypt and Syria, Alexander faced strong confrontation in India. King Porus and King Sambas of Sindh were noted by Alexander for their valour and indomitable spirit. Gehani describes how Alexander constituted a committee to study the situation in Sindh. Aeniocretous, on observing the hermits on the soil of Sindh meditating in extreme heat, expresses curiosity about what they are doing. Aeniocretous informs the hermits about Alexander's orders to pay homage to the great monarch. The hermits reply:

A king who is proud of his destructive weapons will not
be able to understand their subtle philosophy.⁶¹

Such is the sublime legacy of the story of Sindh: a tale of courage, spirituality, forbearance and resilience.

2.2.6 Hindu-Muslim Relations

The tales of Sindh, available to us are a curious mixture and a fascinating coalescence of fact and fiction. On the one hand are the chronicles of Kings, of rulers and their political self-validation, religious ideals, and ideological strategies. On the other hand, there are silenced narratives of laymen, which prop up now and then, inspite of all possible attempts to snuff them. There exist the micro-narratives of laymen who live through the socio-economic, cultural repercussions of the actions of the rulers. Posterity needs to understand and define the narrow margin between fact and fiction, history and story. The emergence and documentation of the micro-narratives, involving laymen, forms a significant information bank for understanding a spatio-temporal framework. It forms a part of the sub-conscious matrix of the psyche of a people and cumulatively contributes towards the creation of a macro-narrative: a larger picture of what the lived empirical

⁶¹ Mohan Gehani. *History of Sindh*. 1998. p 52.

conditions of the people and what the psychological lineaments of their understanding of life were. Though the larger picture thus created will also remain a yet another emplotment, a reconstitution and compilation of documented historical records; a yet another debatable version. I agree with Mr K.R.Malkani:

At this time it is no use going into the rise and fall of dozens of Soomra kings - from Rajpal and Bhoomngar and Dodo to Hamir. Chronicles of Kings are the epics a society.⁶²

The dissenting and schismatic voices of Hindus and Muslims were less communal, less interpersonal, and more triggered, defined and surcharged by political actions. On the interpersonal level, among the masses do we expect hostility between next door neighbors for no immediate reason? Sindhis were known for facing recurrent tides of foreign invasions. They adapted to these reiterating patterns of foreign intrusions and the resulting socio- economic commotion. Traders by profession, they would themselves travel far and wide. There are references to their trading expeditions in Sri Lanka, Java and the Eastern Mediterranean. These travels also find mention in the verses of Shah Abdul Latif. These factors made Sindhis highly adjusting, resilient and open-minded. Survival instinct predominated over and above any kind of fanaticism, insularity and self-centeredness. Keeping in mind this basic Sindhi psyche, it is not difficult to believe the documentation of certain small incidents which are a testimony to the pleasant bonhomie in which Hindus and Muslims lived. Ripples in these relationships more often than not turn out to be politically motivated, buttressing the interests of the power regimes, the establishment. Sometimes, though, the repercussions of political actions are unforeseen and inadvertent. For instance, as K.R.Malkani brings to our notice, Akbar who promoted communal tolerance by allowing more Hindus in top official positions, inadvertently, made Muslims hostile and antagonistic. The latter joined hands with fanatic Muslims and prepared the ground work for the overweening power of Aurangzeb and his prevalence over Dara Shikoh. Fanaticism led to coercive mass conversions of the Hindus. Hence, paradoxically, an act of benevolence and religious tolerance led to an inverse result and created a Muslim dominated province almost a thousand years past Arab invasion. Hence, there

⁶² K.R. Malkani. *The Sindh Story*.1984. p 32.

emerged two opposed currents as a result of Akbar's liberalist policy: one, top jobs in the Mughal court were allocated to more of Hindus; two, Hindus had to undergo greater Muslim fanatic control. I quote from Malkani's testimony:

Hindus could neither keep an idol nor ring a bell, in what passed for their mandirs.⁶³

Hindus should not be allowed to play holi or sing with sarod, shehnai, drum or bugle. Hindu should also be stopped from bowing to the idols or to the river.⁶⁴

Absurd as such injunctions are, they register the insecurity and the sense of contingency which is inbuilt in an autocratic regime. The aim and success of such political regimes lies in translating their own fanatic insecurities into the psychological furniture of the masses so that populace considers the measures of the establishment as true and beneficial. The methods used for such a politic transcription are the Ideological State Apparatuses and the Repressive State Apparatuses, to use Louis Althusser's terms. The resultant fear in the Hindu psyche was devastating. Malkani documents how the Hindus refrained from touching any Arabic book, lest it turned out to be the Koran, and, according to fanatics, convert them to Islam. Hindus also refrained from using the word "rasso" or rassi for rope, because it was close to the word "rasul" meaning 'prophet' and turn them into a Muslims. In spite of such irrational living conditions, the Hindus did not try searching for an alternative to their place of habitation because of no other reason but a firm tenacity to their soil and a sense of belongingness and rootedness to their motherland. It was only force and beleaguering circumstances which coerced the Sindhi Hindus out of Sindh at the time of partition of India in 1947. The question raised is whether the partition was mandatory. Who triggered this division and who benefited from it is highly debatable. A momentous facet of the partition involves those silenced narratives which have remained camouflaged in the turmoil and the maelstrom of partition. These narratives reveal the pleasant bonhomie in which the Hindus and the Muslims lived and the pain incurred on both at the time of their displacement from their motherland. In the preface to his book, Malkani cites two heart-touching stories:

⁶³ K.R. Malkani. *The Sindh Story*. 1984. p 149.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p 148.

One day I was standing in balcony. A Muslim gentleman was happily carrying a big framed group photograph. Soon he could contain his joy no more. And so he stopped, held up the picture for me to see and said he had just bought it because of the respected Seth of his village sitting in that group. It was a memento for him.

One day I was traveling in a city bus. The front seats were reserved for women. Suddenly a Muslim lady sitting in front noticed that an elderly Hindu neighbour was standing. She got up and insisted on the man taking her seat. In vain did the man protest that he was alright standing, and that, in any case, those seats were reserved for women. He had to sit down as the lady persisted with an anguished voice: "I know you, too, will go away".⁶⁵

There are documentations of noted historians like E.B.Hamilton and Eastwick about the enthusiastic participation of both Hindus and Muslims in the celebrations of festivals like Holi and Diwali. Mutual camaraderie and good humored dialectic prevailed. Malkani cites how once Shah Abdul Latif teased his Hindu friend with the question, "How will you Kafirs fare on the day of judgement?" Having given some extra money to the ferryman, the friend replied,

"Those who have an open hand will cross over ahead of all others".⁶⁶

Magnanimity, selflessness and generosity are virtues recommended by all religions alike. Human beings would not be able to create religious schisms based on the differences in virtues recommended by different religious faiths. People of Sindh never did. Their basic humanity came first; Hindu- Muslim schism was secondary. How conscious Hindus and Muslims were regarding the broader common ground of their philosophy cannot be expressed for sure, but the rise and immense popularity of Sufi- saint poets like Shah Abdul Latif and the love-intoxicated Sachal Sarmast vouch for the dissolution of the barriers between Hindus and Muslims. Their poetry, with its

⁶⁵ K.R. Malkani. *The Sindh Story*. 1984. p ix.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p 150.

emancipation from narrow religious confines and endorsement of un-bigoted humanitarian thought processes made them popular with both Hindus and Muslims alike. It is oftentimes cited about Shah Abdul Latif that when questioned whether he was a Shia or a Sunni, he replied that he was somewhere between the two. H.T. Sorley writes:

In reality he was more a Shia than a Sunni, because he intended at a later stage of his life to make the pilgrimage not to Mecca but to Kerbala.⁶⁷

The question was, in all probability, immaterial to Latif himself. At the same time it is significant that Latif cast as strong an influence on the Hindus in Sindh as on the Muslims. Sorley suggests the possibility of "the exaggerated respect for the pir is due to Hindu influences of hero worship". Another possible reason unearthed by Sorley is:

Another form that popular belief took was to carry to extremes what is little less than worship of the dead. How are we to explain the extraordinary phenomenon of Hindus visiting Mussulman shrines and making votive offerings at them, and the general easy-going character of Sindi orthodoxy?⁶⁸

Without exaggeration, the Sindhi pattern of embroidery becomes an embodiment of the cultural and religious amalgam that Sindh stands for. Further, the Sufi poetry of Sindh interweaves mysticism, abstinence, simplicity, ascetic self-effacement and self-annihilation with the topical rhythm of nature and with the aroma of the sanctity of Sindhi customs, the intense adoration of relationships, and the basic tenets of the mesmerizing Sindhi art and culture. Sindhi 'Kadhai' or Sindhi embroidery is found beautifully inscribed in sindhi turbans, footwears, kurtas, cushions and bed spreads and almost everywhere making the spectator marvel at the artists acumen. Their profound aesthetic sense, intense and sincere adherence to laboriousness, patience and hard work in the creation of beautiful works of art is definitely a comment on their quietist resilience, patience and peacefulness.

2.2.7 Literature

⁶⁷ H.T. Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*.1940. p 166.

⁶⁸ Ibid.p 166.

Motilal Jotwani in *Sindhi Literature and Society*, organizes the periods of Sindhi Literature hence:

- (i) The early age (upto 1522), when Sindh was ruled by a few Arab Subedars and the native Sumras and Sammas. During the Sumra period (1050-1350), there is a predominance of native folk narratives like Dodo Chanesar.
- (ii) The Middle age (1522-1843), when Sindh was governed by the alien Arghuns, Tarkhans and Mughal Subedars, and the native Kalhoras and Talpurs. There was a rise of mystic poetry with the backdrop of native love stories .
- (iii) The Modern period (1843-), when it came to be taken over by the British and witnessed the partition of 1947.⁶⁹

The early Sindhi poetry includes verses by an Ismaili missionary Satguru Nur (1079 AD). These missionaries wrote actively by the 14th century. Their verses were written in Sindhi, Gujrati, Punjabi and Multani. As expected, their verses evince an amalgam of Hindu and Islamic mystical tenets. Dr. Jotwani writes:

While the first three major Sindhi poets were Qazi Qazan (d.1551), Shah Abdul Karim (1536-1624) and Shah Inayat (d. 1712), the first distinguished Sindhi poet was Shah Abdul Latif (1689-1752).⁷⁰

Sufi poetry evinces a great importance of the folk narratives of Sindh. These narratives are deeply entrenched in the psychological make-up of the people of Sindh. They subsist beyond the parameters of truth and falsehood. For instance, "Sur Kamod" builds up on the mystical connotations of the preference given to the fisher-maid Noori over the maids of the princely caste by King Tamachi. In Latif's rendition, Noori becomes symbolic of the soul. King Tamachi is the divine spring of all souls. Says Latif:

Credit of raising fisher-maid
Belongs to Tamachi,

⁶⁹ Motilal Jotwani. *Sindhi literature and Society*. 1979. p 4.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p 4.

He took her in his carriage, and
A human-being he
Made out of her... In Kienjhur, see!
All say this is the truth.⁷¹

The people's saying that that is the truth leads the reader's interpretation in two directions: (i) that the love of Noori and Tamachi is common belief, (ii) that it is something that 'all say', and hence divested of the need for testimony or verisimilitude as to its truth value. Simultaneously, there is an assumption that what people think and say collectively has a sense of automatic acceptance and exemption from verification. This is the central tenet of folk narrative, handed down to posterity generation after generation, with certain sanctity as to its being a legacy of time-honored belief and without the requisite need for acute interrogation as to its truth value.

2.3 History of Punjab: Mughal Empire and the Formation of the Order of the Khalsa

Bulleh Shah's time period stretches from 1680 to 1757. His age was full of turbulence and unrest. It is known that in 1526 Babur, the descendant of Timur and Ghengis Khan, crossed the Khyber pass and established the Mughal Empire. The latter stretched from present day Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. The Mughal throne was subsequently occupied by Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb (1658-1707). Akbar's reign of reconciliation and tolerance found a complete turnaround in Aurangzeb's peremptory and suppressive regime. This was followed by a growing decay of Mughal power and a simultaneous unleashing of a prolonged period of confusion and conflict between the natives and the foreign invaders. Post-1707 is the period when Bulleh Shah became witness to the strengthening Sikh constituency which mustered together all its forces into a resisting political militancy and Sikh guerrilla bands against the oppressive Mughal policy of religious persecution. The political exigencies forced them to evolve into a defensive force against foreign invaders and finally as leaders of struggle for the liberation of Punjab.

⁷¹ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p115.

The sufferers in such a conflicting, communally and politically charged, atmosphere were the casualties. The Sikhs, hitherto understood as meek, destitute and oppressed, now posed active resistance and opposition to the ruling Muslim elite. The year 1699 marked the watershed event in the formation of the order of the Khalsa, created to resist Mughal injustice and tyranny. Bulleh Shah's famous kafi, '*Ulte hor zamaane aaye*', refers to divine nemesis which seems to have visited the injustice and tyranny of Mughal regime of Aurangzeb and his successors:

*Ulte hor zamaane aaye.
Kan gaalad nun maaran lagge,
Chidiyan jure khaaye.*⁷²

Translated as:

Strange are the times!
Crows swoop on hawks,
Sparrows do eagles stalk.
Strange are the times!⁷³

In fact, a 2011 publication on Sikh history by Purnima Dhawan is titled *When Sparrows Become Hawks: The Making of the Sikh Warrior Tradition, 1699-1799*.

Disruption of the normal pace of life led to a greater emphasis on religious respite and a quest for peace and security. This led to an increase in the significance of dervishes, poets and scholars whose poetic and spiritual urge was understood as one last gesture at fortifying the waning hopes of the dislocated and splintered Punjab. Where on the one hand battles were being fought, on the other a new cultural amalgam was taking place with the writing of Sufi poetry, whose mysticism was syncretic in nature. Sufism, in its sterling desire of union with the Supreme Being made itself open to the manifold influences of Indian culture. Hence, the intense socio-political crisis created an exigent need for equally vehement psychological and social resolution. This resolution emerged in the form of revolt, anger, or pacification registered in significant literary activity that took place in the verses of great poets like Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah and others.

⁷² Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 115.

⁷³ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 35.

The unrest in Punjab was not to end here. Nader Shah Abdali vanquished the Mughals in 1739. The latter were already weakened by internal strife for succession for three generations after Aurangzeb. Bulleh Shah survived the gratuitous bloodshed of 1746, termed in history as Chota Ghallughara, under the orders of Zakaria Khan, the Governor of Lahore. Harmandir Sahib is desecrated with dead animals and debris and demolished in 1747 by the Afghan Ahmad Shah Durrani, the General of Nader Shah Abdali. Punjab was to witness another execrable and loathsome incident of gratuitous bloodshed initiated by Ahmad Shah Durrani, who got 22,000 sikhs massacred in the village of Koop Khera, termed in history as 'Wadda Ghallughara', the Great Massacre. It was only after the ascent of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh in 1801 that Punjab strongly resisted the perpetual onslaughts of foreign invasions.

The strong political nexus between some of the early Sufis who entered the soil of India along with the Islamic 'jihadists' is undeniable. The Naqshbandiyya order, introduced in India by Khwaja Mohammad Baqi Billah Berang, enjoyed royal patronage from Babur in 1526. The royal patronage waned during Akbar's reign. Towards the decline of Akbar's reign, the Naqshbandi order resumed immense impact through the influence of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624). The alliance between particular political regimes and Sufi orders was founded on mutual benefit. It was a nexus of convenience where both mutually bolstered the image and power position of the other. However, our focus in the present study is on those Sufis who went beyond reductive, self-serving political alliance and ideological configurations. For instance, Dr. Motilal Jotwani in *Sufis of Sindh* explains how Shah Abdul Latif was impressed by Muhammad Zaman of Lawari (1713-1774), a Naqshbandi and also a believer in 'Wahdah-al-wajud' and yet due to Zaman's disapproval of 'Sama', Latif distanced himself from Zaman. Genuine Sufi poets like Latif and Bulleh Shah charted their own spiritual journey and stood apart from the politically expedient Sufi mystics as well as detached themselves from those concepts which became impediments in their realization of God.

Here is an attempt to trace the background against which the Punjabi Sufi poetry shall be studied. Sikh Gurus beginning with Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539 A.D.) confronted and posed resistance to Mughal atrocities. It is interesting to understand the saintly lives led by the Sikh gurus, which brings forth their similarity with the contemporary

devotional bhakti saints. The latter were taking over the whole of India at this temporal juncture. Nanak received basic education from both the village Brahmin and the Qazi. Sardar Singh Sekhon comments:

Guru Nanak's philosophy is a remarkable mixture of Upanishadic idealism and empirical realism.⁷⁴

Very objectively, Guru Nanak criticizes the caste system of the Hindus as well as finds Muslim formalistic and ritualistic elements as hypocritical and meaningless. Guru Nanak lays emphasis on meditation and 'nam simran' in his poem 'Omkar'. In the thick of political affairs, Guru Nanak deplores Babar's invasion and tyranny in India. The invocation of 'Japji' presents a vivid description of God, in a pithy and succinct verse. Nanak's God is described as follows:

There is one God.
He is the supreme truth.
He, the creator, is without fear and without hate
He, the omnipresent, pervades the universe.
He is not born.
Nor does he die to be born again.
By his grace shall you worship Him.⁷⁵

Nanak further presents a systematic exegesis on the question of truth, and the need to lift the veil of maya, the illusion created by the materialistic scintillating world. Singing the praises and attributes of God enables humans to become like the One they emulate. A contemporary of Kabir and Ravidas (15th century) Guru Nanak traveled for thirty long years in his spiritual quest. Guru Angad (1504-1552) ascended the 'gaddi' in 1539. He was approached by yogis and saints of different sects. He popularized and encouraged the concept of 'Guru ka Langar' started by Guru Nanak. He was followed by Guru Amar Das and Guru Ramdas. Guru Ramdas was the designer of Harmandir Sahib. The following specimen from Guru Ramdas's hymns amply express his intense humility, given the fact of ephemerality of this bodily existence and inefficacy of the realm of senses in the realization of God:

⁷⁴ Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal. *A History of Punjabi Literature*. 1992. p 29.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p 37.

The Pandit reads the Shastras and the Smritis
The yogi shouts-- Gorakh! Gorakh!
I am unlettered, I repeat the name of God.
...I am unlettered, God's name alone can save me.
God! yours is this creation,
You are everywhere.
Says Nanak, the devotee is glorified,
Eyeless that I am, God is my only support.⁷⁶

The kind of ignorance Guru Ramdas confesses about himself is the ignorance of worldliness, of learning, of pedantism, of an inability to read the scriptures. A proficiency in these literary and spiritual texts has as its concomitant pride and hubris, which are in reality the qualities of the flaunting and ostentatious Pundit and the Mullah. 'Nam simran,' chanting the name of the deity brings human being close to the serene and the placid realm of God. What is required is unmitigated dedication towards God. The perpetual 'simran' of the 'Word', which is analogous to the name of God is the key to union with Him:

I have no status, I belong not to a high caste,
I have no home, no place to go to,
The Word has removed all my doubts,
The Guru himself has bestowed this upon me.⁷⁷

The 'Word' with a capital 'W' is an unequivocal reference to the evocation of God as 'Om-kar', described in "Japji" as follows:

Omkar
True name
Person who creates
Beyond fear and opposition
A form beyond time
Unborn, self-born
The guru's grace.

⁷⁶ Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal. *A History of Punjabi Literature*. 1992. p 45.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p 46.

The ancient truth, ageless truth
 Is also, now, truth.
 And Nanak says,
 It will always be truth.⁷⁸

There is a parallel reference to 'Alif' in Sufi poetry. Shah Abdul Latif's refusal to learn the alphabet beyond 'Alif' is a gesture of allegiance to simple-minded and single-minded devotion to the Supreme Being. In a similar vein, in the Indian Vedantism, we come across Lord Krishna's own declaration in text 33, chapter 10 of the *Bhagwad Gita*, "The Opulence of the Absolute":

Aksharanaamakaaroasmi dwandvah saamasikasya cha
 Of letters I am the letter A...⁷⁹

Such strong parallels between the vantage point of Sufism and the existing Vedantic texts as well as the emergent Sikh scriptures provided a favorable and like-minded psychological atmosphere to the Sufis.

Guru Ramdas nominated his youngest son Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh guru. In 1604, Guru Arjan compiled the 'shabads' of all the Sikh gurus as part of *Guru Granth Sahib* as the holy book of the Sikhs. Guru Arjan was tortured and killed by the Mughal rulers for refusing to make changes to *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Teg Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru sacrificed himself to save the Hindus of Kashmir from coercive conversion to Muslims. He was martyred in Delhi. The site of his martyrdom is now seen as gurudwara Sisganj. This incident inspired the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, to militarize his followers. He fought battles with limited men and restricted arms against Aurangzeb in 1704 and against Wazir Khan, the chief of Sirhind. In spite of the brutal killing of Guru Gobind Singh's four sons as well as his father and mother, Guru Gobind Singh wrote a letter to Aurangzeb called the 'Zafarnamah' in which he rebukes the Mughal king and also admonishes him to adopt the righteous path of honesty and justice, because he like everyone else will have to face the court of God. Madanjit Kaur in *Guru Gobind Singh: Historical and Ideological perspective*, writes:

⁷⁸ John Stratton Hawley and Mark Jurensmeier. *Songs of the Saints of India*. 2004. p 78.

⁷⁹ Swami Prabhupada. *Bhagwad Geeta As It Is*. Web. 5 December 2018.
http://www.bhagavatgita.ru/files/Bhagavad-gita_As_It_Is.pdf.

Guru Gobind Singh was the most popular hero of the Indian history. A beau ideal of the Punjabis, the stories of his prodigious strength, valor, and chivalry multiplied and he became a legendary figure in his life time. He is said to have the magnetic charm to transform an ordinary bird into a ferocious hawk.⁸⁰

Guru Gobind Singh added the 115 hymns of the ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur, to *Guru Granth Sahib*. It stands for the amalgamation of the manifold religious mystical strands. It became an epitome of inclusive and composite culture of India which can not be understood in mutually exclusive water-tight compartments.

Hence, the devotional poetic stance became the bedrock of the Indian peninsula escalating from the 2nd century BC Thiruvalluvar, though not called a bhakti poet but a social reformer, to the sangam poets in the south, and further on till the bhakti poetry of the medieval period towards the north including Kabir, a 15th-century Indian mystic poet and saint, whose writings influenced Bhakti movement and whose verses are found in Sikh scripture *Adi Granth*. Meera, also known as Meera Bai, was a 16th-century Hindu mystic poet and devotee of Krishna. She is a celebrated Bhakti saint, particularly in the North Indian Hindu tradition. Tukaram, a 17th-century poet-saint of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra was part of the egalitarian, personalized Varkari devotional tradition. Tukaram is best known for his 'abhanga' devotional poetry and community-oriented worship with spiritual songs known as 'kirtans'. His poetry was devoted to Vitthala or Vithoba, an avatar of Hindu god Vishnu. Tulsidas, (1532–1623) was a Hindu poet-saint, reformer and philosopher from Ramanandi Sampradaya in the lineage of Jagadguru Ramanandacharya, known for his devotion to Lord Rama. Raskhan (b.1548 A.D.) was both a Muslim and a follower ('bhakta') of Lord Krishna. His birth name was Sayyad Ibrahim and is known to have lived in Amroha, India. *Raskhan* was his pen name in Hindi. In his early years, he became a follower of Lord Krishna and learned the religion from Goswami Vitthalnath and began living in Vrindavan and spent his whole life there. This devotional bhakti movement, many of whose figures are incorporated in *Guru Granth Sahib*, finds a more militant devotional parallel in the Sikh gurus and Punjab's militancy against the oppressors. The Sikh gurus posed active resistance to

⁸⁰ Madanjit Kaur. *Guru Gobind Singh: Historical and Ideological perspective*. 2007. p 230.

the merciless and the tyrannical rule of Mughal tyrants like Aurangzeb, while maintaining the high ideals consistent with the Bhakti or devotional strain very prominent in the matrix of Sikh religion. Gurbaksh Singh, in *The Khalsa Generals*, documents the high character of the Sikhs and their bravery, hence:

Sikhs are great experts in the use of the sword and the art of war. Like lions, they jump on the enemy, like foxes they run away and get out of our reach. The bodies are rock hard and in physical strength, one Sikh is equivalent to fifty men... Come see the lions in the battlefield to learn the art of war from them. They do not kill a woman, a child or a coward running away from the fight. They do not rob any person nor do they take away the ornaments of a person, be she a queen or a slave girl. They commit no adultery; rather they respect the women of even their enemies. They always shun thieves and adulterers and in generosity, they surpass Hatim.⁸¹

The author emphasizes the authenticity of these details with the qualification that these comments are cited from the eye-witness account of Qazi Nur Mohammed, who was an enemy of the Sikhs, and who came to Punjab with Abdali and was present during many Sikh battles.

Before his assassination by the Mughal tyrants, Guru Gobind Singh deputed Baba Banda Singh Bahadur as his General and a leader to the Sikhs. The latter fought against Mughal tyranny and carried on Guru Gobind Singh's "Hukumnamah" to take arms against the oppressive Mughal rulers. It is interesting that both the oppressed Muslims and Hindus allied with Baba Banda against unjust tyrants. Under Baba Banda's command, the Sikhs gained dramatic ascent to power. In 1709, Baba Banda captured the Mughal city of Samana, killing 10,000 Muslims. In 1710, Baba Banda killed the atrocious Wazir Khan, the governor of Sirhind. In the face of Sikh ascent to power, petty officials converted to Sikhism. Gurbaksh Singh's book *The Khalsa Generals*, published in 1927 by Sikh Missionary College in Ludhiana, writes:

Dindar Khan, an official of the nearby village, took Amrit

⁸¹ Gurbaksh Singh. *The Khalsa Generals*. 1927. p 34.

and became Dindar Singh. The newspaper writer of Sirhind, Mir Nasir Uddin, became Mir Nasir Singh".⁸²

This is the historical and cultural background against which the development of Sufi paradigm and Sufi poetry in Punjab is understood. Because of his rebelliousness, open-mindedness, blithe spirit untroubled by dogmatism and his disavowal of ritualistic confines of the rule- book, Bulleh Shah seems to be standing on the margins vis-a-vis mainstream society, politics, the pillars of society and the followers of officially sanctioned religion. His emancipation from religious dogmaticism takes him close to the impulse of humanitarianism and universal love. I quote Vinod Shahi:

In the present day idiom, we may call it an example of non-committal behaviorial pattern. But realizing his unmitigated commitment towards humanity, he appears to be, instead, universally committed. It is difficult to find another such example of a person emancipating people in Bulleh Shah's idiosyncratic manner.⁸³
(Translation mine)

The inward turn proved momentous for gravitating people of all religious groups towards Sufi paradigm. Bulleh Shah's popular Kafi, "*Bullah ki jaana mai kaun*" (I know not who I am) makes an attempt at attaining self- knowledge through introspection. Bulleh Shah recommends self-effacement and abdication of formulized human identity, Crystalized by artificial sociological determinants to arrive at the quintessential human being. Shah aptly critiques the superficiality, sham, and circumlocution which are deeply entrenched in the hypocritical institutional religious ministry. It reminds of Rene Descartes (1596-1650), whose famous utterance 'cogito ergo sum', 'I think, therefore, I am', attempted to arrive at the reality of human existence through a method of doubt, Doubting all that was extraneous to the certainty of human existence, Descartes dismissed all that had even a shadow of doubt. Bulleh

⁸² Gurbaksh Singh. *The Khalsa Generals*. 1927. p 17.

⁸³ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 15. In Vinod Shahi's words:

आज के दौर की जुबान में कहें तो यह एक गैर-प्रतिबद्ध व्यवहार शैली का
mnkgj.k gā i jūr q mudh eul; oā l kfk tks cblngka प्रतिबद्धता है, उसे
देखते हुए वे सर्व प्रतिबद्ध जैसे मालूम होते हैं। मुक्ति का ऐसा मुक्त खेल
'kk; n gh dHkh fd l h vkj us [ksy dj fn [kk; k gkā

Shah eschews all binaries as follows:

I am neither among sinners nor among saints;
 Neither happy nor unhappy.
 I belong neither to water nor to earth.
 I am neither fire nor air.
 I know not who I am.⁸⁴

Such dismantling of the capability of narrow confines of man-made binaries to encapsulate human identity drew Hindus and Muslims alike towards Sufi poets. Literary history of Sufism as much as the history of devotional Bhakti poets is critical of the superficial rituals, the shallowness of institutionalized religions, the insincerity of mullahs and pandits as well as an emphasis on the facade of reading religious scriptures. Sufism dilutes the water-tight compartmentalization of men as Hindus and Muslims. This is evident from their disciples who constitute both Hindus and Muslims, and that too without any exigent need for proselytization from one religion to the other. I quote from Attar Singh's paper presented at the "National Seminar on Bulleh Shah" held at the Punjab University Campus, Chandigarh:

This concern for the freedom of the human soul from the bondage to the finality of the denominational identities, which choked up the divine possibility, with which ever individual is invested at birth brings the two great cultural streams the Hindu-Sikhs and the Muslim-Sufi closest to each other. The common ground towards which both seem at that stage to be probing their way was that of a nascent human estate not restrained by dogmas or theologies.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 31. The original in Devnagri script as it appears in Vinod Shahi's *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path* reads:

uk foPp 'knh uk xeukdh]
 uk eš foPp i yhrh i kdih]
 uk eš vkch uk eš [kkdh]
 uk eš vkfr'k uk eš i kS kA
 cYyk dh tk. kka eš dKs kA (p 50)

⁸⁵ Attar Singh. "Roots of Bulleh Shah's Tragic Sensibility". National Seminar on Bulle Shah: Sufism and Bhakti in Medieval Indian Poetry. Punjab University Campus, Chandigarh, 14-15 September. 1981. p12.

It is also important to understand the affinity among the various bhakti streams, whether ‘saguna’ bhakti or ‘nirgun’a’ bhakti. ‘saguna’ bhakti poets are the devotees of Vishnu in his incarnations as Krishna and Rama or devotees of Shiva. The former are called Vaishnavites; the latter Shaivites. Those worshipping Shakti or goddess Durga and her varied incarnations are called Shaktas. While being monotheistic and owing allegiance to their particular God or goddess, they share with the ‘nirgun’ poet saints certain basic tenets: a single-minded devotion and a personal love relationship with the Supreme Being. Both ‘saguna’ and ‘nirgun’a’ poets were critical of ritual observances so central to the Brahmin priesthood. Most of these poets transcended and openly criticised the caste system which was deeply entrenched in the traditional religious hierarchy. They consciously spurned from using the language of elite priesthood. Instead they registered their inmost thoughts in the vernacular and regional languages close to the heart of the masses. In fact, the ‘saguna’ bhakti was a gesture of making divine presence immediately palpable to the human sensibility through ‘prem-marga’, whereas the ‘nirgun’ bhakti was understood as a more abstruse, abstract and obscure path of realizing God through ‘gyana- marga’. ‘saguna’ bhakti was not an end in itself but a stepping stone to the attainment and union with the Supreme godhead. Meera is known to have finally merged with her Giridhar Gopal, ‘real’-izing the state so desired and articulated by Sant Kabir:

Death which intimidates all,
Is dear to me.
I wait for death, when I’ll
Attain bliss absolute.⁸⁶ (Translation mine)

That is the reason why even Shankaracharya, the prominent figure of ‘advaita’ (monism) in the early 8th century A.D., while focusing on the unity of ‘atman’ and ‘nirgun’ Brahman (without attributes), devotes hymns to the service of Shiva, Vishnu

⁸⁶ “Satguru Kabir”. web. 10 jan. 2019. < <http://www.kabir.ca/satguru-kabir/> >

ftl s ejus l s tx Mjs
ej s eu v kullnA
कब मरिहूँ, कब पाइहूँ
ij u ijekullnAA

and Shakti, only to make 'advaita' simpler and enabling for common understanding. Shankaracharya, hence, posited God as pure consciousness, beyond name and form. The path to attainment of God for Shankaracharya was not worship, but philosophical discrimination ('viveka') and renunciation of the real ('vairagya'). I quote from *Self-knowledge*, Swami Nikhilananda's English translation of Shankaracharya's *Atmabodh*, published by Sri Ramakrishna Math in 1947:

...he was aware that few aspirants are strong enough to climb this steep path. The majority require a tangible symbol of truth, anthropomorphic or otherwise, and also a human relationship with a personal God.⁸⁷

Similarly the 'nirgun' and 'sagun' bhakti poets also take different routes to the realization of God. It is, therefore, redundant to create a bifurcation and utter segregation between the two streams of Bhakti poets.

2.4 Socio-Cultural background of Punjab

2.4.1 Topography

Etymologically, the word Punjab comprises of two words- 'punj' meaning five and 'ab' meaning water. Prior to the partition of Punjab, five rivers, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Satluj, flew through Punjab endowing a plethora of bounties on the landscape and its people. Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and East Punjab were a part of the undivided Punjab. Post-partition, Beas and Sutlej are exclusive to the Indian side of the Punjab. River Ravi passes from the Indian part of the Punjab to the West Punjab, now in Pakistan. The Punjabi folk lore steeped in the pristine beauty of the landscape of Punjab forms a continuum with the psychological paraphernalia of its people, their mores and manners, thoughts and beliefs.

2.4.2 People

J.C. Agarwal and S.C. Agarwal in *Modern History of Punjab*, aptly call Punjab the "land of Golden Temple, Baisakhi, Bhakra, Bhangra and Sarson ka saag"⁸⁸. The book

⁸⁷ Shankaracharya. *Atmabodh*. Trans. Swami Nikhilananda. 1947. p iv.

⁸⁸ J.C. Agarwal and S.C. Agarwal. *Modern History of Punjab*. 1992. p 15.

cites the description of Punjab in pithy and evocative phrases, from a publication of the Punjab Government Tourist Department:

Intense people. Music and Melody. Gaiety and colour.
History and legends. Power and Plenty. Rich, swaying
fields and vibrant farmers.⁸⁹

Known for its high standards of courtesy, hospitality, courage and valor, as well as immense respect for the women folk, Punjab has had a distinct charisma of its own for the rest of India. The Indian army has always been proud of the Punjabi jawans who are noted for their bravery in the battlefield.

The vitality and vibrance of Punjabi folk rhythm and folk songs as well as folk dances, Bhangra and Gidda, have endeared themselves to the entire North- Indian belt. Punjabi folk rhythms have gained great popularity in Bollywood as well as outside India. In spite of the trials and tribulations they have been through, the people of Punjab cherish music and melody connecting them with the rhythm of nature. The predominantly agrarian mode of living has made the majority live by the sweat of the brow, while simultaneously leaving them leisure time to indulge in fine arts. All this deserves great appreciation keeping in mind the intense sufferings and adverse political circumstances Punjab had to undergo. However, the hard- working and highly principled Punjabi made the disabling adversities and inimical circumstances enabling through sheer hard work, resilience and capacity to fight for justice and righteousness:

The people of Punjab have undergone terrible ordeals.
Like Phoenix, the mythological Chinese bird, they have
risen again and again from the embers, every time
younger and more zestful. Their courage, endurance and
fortitude are unparalleled.⁹⁰

2.4.3 Religion

Punjab enjoys a rich literary and religious background. Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal in *The History of Punjabi Literature*, published by Sahitya Academy underline the fact that the Siddha yogic tradition of Gorakh Nath seems to have

⁸⁹ J.C.Agarwal and S.C.Agarwal. *Modern History of Punjab*. 1992. p 20.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p 20.

flourished in Punjab between the 9th and the 11th centuries. This was also the time period of the evolution of Punjabi language "moving towards what may be called self-sufficient Modern Indian Languages."⁹¹

The case of Siddha yogis brought forth by Sekhon and Duggal is a very important one. It brings forth that not necessarily a particular mystic strand should originally belong to a particular region to affect the religious and psychological sentiments of that place:

Gorakh Nath was not born in the Punjab but he is said to have cultivated and made friends with the people of Punjab. A lot of his poetry belongs to Punjabi grammar and diction.⁹²

The medieval yogis like Gorakhnath (11th Century) traveled widely across the length and breadth of India. Gorakhnath Math is centred at Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh. It runs two Gorakhnath temples, one in Nepal and the other a little south of Gorakhpur. But, their influence can not be restricted to their place of origin or birth. So is the case with medieval Bhakti saints. Historical accounts reveal Meera Bai as the princess of Medta province of Jodhpur, Rajasthan. She was another lonesome dissident voice in the bhakti tradition. She had to face dire opposition from society being a woman, being the daughter in law of the royal household of the king of Chittor and turned a widow at a very young age. Understood as a dire threat to the existing societal norm for a woman, she was unaffected by societal opposition in her absolute devotion to her Girdhar Gopal. Meera's language is Marwadi, and yet,

Meerabai's language exhibits the use of Gujrati, Braj and Punjabi languages as well. Meerabai, like other saint poets Namdev, Kabir, Ravidas and others, expressed herself in a mix of many languages.⁹³
(Translation mine)

⁹¹ Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal. *A History of Punjabi Literature*. 1992. p 2.

⁹² Ibid. p 2.

⁹³ Indu Singh. Ed. *Meera Bai*. 2015. p 10. Indu Singh's comment reads:

ehjk ckbZ dh Hkk"kk ea xqt jkrh] czt] vk\$ i atkch Hkk"kk ds iz lx Hkh feyrs
gā ehjk ckbZ vU; I Urka ukno] dchj] johnkI vkfn dh Hkkfr feyh
tyh Hkk"kk ea vi us Hkkoka dks 0; Dr djrh gā

The pertinent point is about the non- insularity of the bhakti poets of India and about the time- old existence of the category of trans- regionality in the mystic strain of the medieval poetry and also about the non- possibility of a closed circuit of Sufi poetry, unaffected by and completely oblivious of the emergence and existence of devotional bhakti strand of mystic poetry in India. Sufi mystics share the same trait with the medieval Bhakti poets. The immediate exemplars of the aforementioned non- possibility of total obliviousness of Indian mysticism on the part of Sufis are

- (i) The reference to the nath-yogis in the poetry of Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif. Bulleh Shah writes “*paaya hai kuch paaya hai, mere Satguru alakh lakhaaya hai.*”⁹⁴ Here, Bulleh Shah brings the 'Alakh nirajan' of the nath yogis close to the Sikh tradition of the 'satguru'. Satguru is the one who made the invisible ('alakh') visible ('lakhaaya hai') and a palpable reality to the poet.
- (ii) Elsewhere, Bulleh Shah also alludes to the mesmerizing flute of 'Kanha' (Krishna):

Kanha astonishes with his melodious flute
 The melody speaks of Kanha
 and celebrates the divine beauty inscribed in all.
 The music is universal
 It reaches everyone.
 A few understand its purport.
 One who can apprehend cosmic music, knows the true
 value of this flute.
 Kanha astonishes with his melodious flute.⁹⁵
 (Translation mine)

⁹⁴ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 143.

⁹⁵ Ibid. p 172. The original text in Devnagri script says:

cU l h dkgu vpjt ctkbA
 बन्सी वालियाँ काहन कहावें,
 l c nk ucl vuil eukoḡ
 dS h fc[kMh [ky jpkbz
 cU l h dkgu vpjt ctkbz--
 cU l h l c dkbz l qis l qikoḡ
 vjFk bl nk dkbz fojyk i koḡ
 ts dkbz vugn dh l j i koḡ l ks bl cd h nk l kshkba
 cU l h dkgu vpjt ctkbz--

Bulleh Shah's inclusive sensibility is mesmerized by the ecstatic music of Kanha's bansi. The music is that of universal harmony. It is all-embracing and all-encompassing. The music is astonishing and epitomizes, for Bulleh Shah, not the physical audible manifestation of Kanha's music of the 'Saguna' bhakti tradition, but the intuitive cosmic music ('anhad') which is palpable only to the ardent spiritual aspirant. This reminds of John Keats' line from "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter⁹⁶

Here is the transcendence of the narrow reductive confines of restricted religiosity by the Sufi poets of Sindh and Punjab. Hence, if we try to pin down the extant religious and socio-cultural mores of the two provinces under consideration, we need to take a wholistic view of this culture, which presented itself with open arms to the Sufi poets of Sindh and Punjab. A closed system of thinking as such is indispensably characterized as moribund, closed and declining and perishing. This was, however, not the case with Sufi mysticism. This is the reason why Sufi following has increased over the centuries.

2.4.4 Literature

Literary works form important cultural posts for the analysis and understanding of the socio-cultural milieu of a certain period. Literary works like the *Rahitnamas* (codes of conduct) which delineate the path prescribed by the Sikh Gurus, *Heer* by Waris Shah, Bulleh Shah's *Kafian* form the cultural markers of the Punjab and give us a glimpse of the mystical sensibility of the period. Waris Shah's (1730-1790) *Heer*, brings forth the various aspects of the 18th century Punjab: food, dress, ornaments, customs, taboos, beliefs, ascetics, peers and jogis. The adventure of Hir and Ranjha was an idealized love story of immaculate love. It is re-interpreted by Bulleh Shah in his mystical Kafis by allocating the status of Supreme Godhead to Ranjha and himself donning the role of Heer. Ranjha's becoming a jogi and the intense love between Heer and Ranjha which unites them only in death efficaciously work on both secular and spiritual planes. In another conception of Ranjha, he is understood as an incarnation of Krishna

⁹⁶ John Keats. "Ode on a Grecian Urn". Web. 27 July, 2018.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ode_on_a_Grecian_Urn#Poem.>

and shares with the latter significant attributes: Ranjha is a shepherd, sits under a tree, plays a flute and feels at one with the world of nature in a pastoral setting. Hence, there is an intermingling of religious and folk iconography in the imaging of Ranjha.

Folk songs are indispensable to the matrix of Punjabi culture and literature. Sekhon and Duggal describe folk songs as "the autobiography of a people."⁹⁷ Situated at the exposed and assailable border of India, Punjab has had more than commonplace share of jeopardy and contingency. The result has been an equally vigorous effort at re-instatement of a sense of happiness, enthusiasm, and vitality in the Punjabi life. The essentially agrarian mode of life brought the people of Punjab in close proximity with the rhythm of nature and the perpetual tussle with hostile foreign forces had made Punjabi men as well as women fearless, utterly undaunted by indomitable circumstances and both of these traits are reflected in Punjabi folk songs. The Punjabi maiden prefers to go to the battlefield with her man, rather than stay behind:

If you must go to the battle front, oh rider of the blue
horse!

Carry me in your haversack...⁹⁸

Men and women encounter everyday adversities of life through a greater tenacity towards hope, registered emphatically in their folk songs. True love of Heer-Ranjha has been eulogized in the Sikh scriptures. The land of Punjab has assimilated and incorporated other pairs of folk lovers:

Laila Majnun, Shirin Farhad, Yusuf Zuleikha and Shah
Behram belong to west Asia. Nala Damayanti,
Roopmati Baazbahadur, Bharathari Hari belong to
central India, Sami Dhola to Rajasthan and Phulmo
Ranjhu to Himachal Pradesh.⁹⁹

Understood as true existing lovers whose sterling and unconditional idealistic love became exemplary for posterity to emulate and live up to, these folk lovers assume

⁹⁷ Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal. *A History of Punjabi Literature*. 1992. p 9.

⁹⁸ Ibid. p 9.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p 14.

spiritual dimensions in the articulations of Sufi poets who envision true love as the means of communion between the human lover and the divine beloved. The partition of India in 1947 may have divided Punjab territorially, but the matrix of folk culture remains unperturbed. This folk culture holds the efficacy of nullifying man-made divisions on communal and territorial grounds. Sekhon aptly puts it:

Political considerations led to the division of the Punjab in 1947. The land of the five rivers was split into two. Its population was exchanged. Its waters were divided. Its assets were shared. But one thing which escaped the division is the folk lore and folk songs of the people of Punjab.¹⁰⁰

Sekhon qualifies his assertion with the example of the intense reverence offered at the dargah of Sufi saints in the Indian part of Punjab and a parallel evocation of Lord Krishna as the desired and perfect bridegroom by young maiden across the border in folk songs sung by Muslim women:

Why stand you under the sandalwood tree, my daughter?
I wait for you, o father, it's time to look for a groom.
What sort of a groom would you have, my daughter?
One like the moon in the stars,
And Krishna among the lunars, O father.¹⁰¹

Here, we have a laudable example of the disintegration of division founded on communal grounds. Folk narratives thrive in a free, open, boundless realm of the world of feelings and emotions, an emancipated sensibility unfettered by artificial boundaries and man-made divisions. Sufi poetry of Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif build up on these emancipated and emotive narratives and give a mystical flight to them in their urge for realization and union with God. They attempt to give meaning to the dark, dismal, splintered consciousness marred by divisions, dissent and schismatic drive on personal, psychological and social as well as religious planes.

¹⁰⁰ Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal. *A History of Punjabi Literature*. 1992. p 15.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p 15.

2.4.5 Common Heritage of Sindh and Punjab

There is a history of Arab invasion of Sindh beginning in 711A.D. But it is equally momentous that a concomitant of repeated interventions and persistent foreign invasions from across the north west border, the diverse topography consisting of hilly mountainous regions, fertile valleys and flourishing rivers and the highly agrarian style of living were instrumental in the nurturing of Sufi literature of the 17th and 18th century. The disruptive foreign invasions led to a veritable bid for peace and settled psychological conditions in the minds of the laymen. The topography and agrarian economy would be conducive to the growth and nurturing of the folk narratives seeped in the language of both the provinces.

The life-sustaining and life-affirming value of these folk tales is felt by the people of Punjab even today. People live with these narratives inscribed in their hearts. Their truth value is less important than their value as a life-affirming force. That is why the real, the factual, the empirical, the verifiable and the material categories of existence are complemented by the not so real, the folk, the mythical, yet life-enhancing tropes ingrained in the psychology of the people. People are the source of these narratives. They live with these narratives and gain strength from them in the vicissitudes of everyday life.

It is important to understand the close vicinity and cultural proximity which Sindh and Punjab have enjoyed. They share historical, cultural, religious and ethical ties. Both celebrated births in the family. Parallel to the Hindu 'mundan', the Muslims had Akiko; Hindu boys had "janeo" at the age of eight, the Muslim boys were circumcised; wedding songs cohered; Hindu bridegroom proved his manhood by breaking a coconut, the Muslim bridegroom broke an earthen pot.¹⁰² The mutual participation in the celebrations made for several Ids in the same month. The Muslims would happily partake of Hindu langars. The menu of the langar at Sadhbela, the leading Hindu temple of Sindh is thus stated:

Daal, Poori, Halwa, Khichri, Aachar, Papad, Basar and
Kana Prasad.¹⁰³

¹⁰² L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 159.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p 159.

Another significant aspect of the Sindh- Punjab ties is the geographical proximity of the two provinces. There doesnot exist an absolute disjunction between the people and their languages. The survival of Hindus in Sindh despite Arab intrusions and large scale conversions of Hindus is understood as parallel to the rise of Sikhism in the Punjab.

2.5 Emergence of Sufism in Sindh and Punjab

The Sufi saints in Sindh and Punjab have enjoyed a position of great repute and veneration. In her book *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sind (1843-1947)*, Sarah F.D.Ansari explores the importance of the local religious elite of Sindh. Under the British rule from 1843-1947, the Sufi saint rose to immense power position. One reason was a preference and prominence of Sufism in the psyche of the masses as opposed to more orthodox forms of Muslim practice. Secondly, the tribal nature of Sindhi society gained more prominent position for Sufi pirs as mediators and connecting links between tribes. The population of Sindh was kept in a cohesive harmony through common pirs who enabled enhancement of inter-tribal ties, economic as well as trade relations as well as religious harmony among otherwise insular groups.¹⁰⁴

Sufism has been understood as the eternal, mystic, divine, pristine connection with the Supreme Being divested of the fetters of religious orthodoxy and staunch rituals and customs. Masood Ali Khan discusses the "inexpressible and indescribable" nature of the experience of a religious mystic. This search for the self and its connection with the great scheme of things and with the divine force governing both living and non-living forms of existence has been a perennial and timeless quest of the human mind, irrespective and independent of the religious frame and also operative within the various religious frameworks. This pristine mystic mission was however tinged with politics. R. Upadhyay, in an online article "Sufism in India: Its Origin, History and Politics" discusses the predominant politicization of the Sufi cult contrary to the proclaimed spiritual mission. Upadhyay lucidly remarks.

¹⁰⁴ Although not just religious influence, Pirs are also known to have possessed material power in terms of landholdings and political influence. Sarah F.D. Ansari, in *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sind, 1843-1947*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1992, remarks "Just as no man would dream of being seen bareheaded, virtually every Sindhi Muslim had his or her Murshid. To be 'be-pir', without a pir, was almost unthinkable and was understood as being a 'kafir' or non-believer." p13.

Sufis had accompanied the Muslim marauders in their conquest and brought Islam in contact with Hindu priests and saints. They were receptive to some of the local Hindu traditions may be for the tactical reason to entice the locals towards Islam but ensured that the local norms are not accommodated against the watertight Islamic belief, dogma and practice of Quran, Hadith, Sharia...their deeply rooted belief and practice of Islamic norms within Perso-Arabic traditions remained the bed-rock of the mystic movement.¹⁰⁵

Nagendra Kumar Singh in *Islamic Mysticism in India* mentions Dara Shikoh (1615-1659) as the only Muslim ruler who made efforts to find a common ground between Hindu and Muslim religious thought. Dara Shikoh was then accused of heresy.

However, given that the establishment of Sufi orders in India was co-terminus with the rising political power of Muslims, it is necessary to understand that although the incipient seeds of Sufism lay in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Persia, Khorasan, Balkh, Bukhara and Samarkand, yet when it traveled to the Indian soil, there evolved the Indian brand of Sufism as a result of an inevitable interaction with the mystical instinct already prospering on the Indian soil. The politically motivated bigotry and conversion by the Muslim regimes in India had two-fold results:

- (i) Unwelcome and forced proselytization, creating an atmosphere of psychological unrest among the masses.
- (ii) It inadvertently leads to a positive confluence of Hindu- Muslim mystic beliefs.

Hence, Sufi thought, which is understood as a way of life, has been a process of evolution, imbibing certain philosophical and mystical tenets of other mystical frameworks, while discarding their dissonant components, incompatible with the attainment of direct communion with the Supreme Godhead. R.A. Nicholson ascribes the concept of merger of the individual soul in the divine being as having Indian origin. Nicholson ascribes it to "the pantheism of the Vedanta"¹⁰⁶. The Indian brand of Sufism

¹⁰⁵ R. Upadhyay. "Sufism in India: Its Origin, History and Politics". South Asian group, 924. Sept 2012. Web. 27 Feb 2017. < <http://www.southasiananalysis.org/paper924>>

¹⁰⁶ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mystics of Islam*. Kindle ed., IndoEuropean Publishing, 2010. N. pag.

was another journey of gradual evolution. In the introduction to Dr. Motilal Jotwani's book *Sufis of Sindh*, under the heading "The type of Tasawuf in Sindh", the author writes that his enunciation, 'ana 'l Haqq' put forth by Mansur-al Hallaj (858A.D.-922A.D.), for which he was mercilessly lynched and decapitated gained acceptance gradually and that too on the Indian soil. While Uthman al- Hujwiri (b. Circa 1000) in his *Kashful Mahjub (The Unveiling of the Veiled)* had found the possibility of merger with the 'Divine Personality' as something 'heretical'. Further, Al- Qushairi (986 A.D.-1076 A.D.) and Imam Ghazli (1058 A.D.-1111A.D.) took a pragmatic stand endorsing 'ana l- Haqq' as not heretical so long as the Shariah is un-tampered. It was by the period of Muhiyuddin ibn Arabi (1165 A.D.-1240A.D.) that "the Sufi metaphysical doctrine of immanence or 'Wahdah al- Wujud' came to stay".¹⁰⁷ Hence, we find that Sufi poets who gained immense popularity on the Indian soil were those who outgrew the strict, reductive, rule-book formula to the divine path. The Sufi phenomenon found a favorable flourishing ground on the Indian soil. The medieval Indian conception of 'Shunya' has as its concomitant openness and not a claustrophobic closed psychological system, but absorbing all the manifold mystic elements, assimilating foreign ideas into a new harmony. Hence, mystic rapport between the deity and the devotee has been subject to evolution. It has been open to foreign influences and has reciprocally influenced them as well. The reason why Sufis who traveled to India from the north-west found repose in the soil of India lies in the extant Indian Vedantic philosophy, the prominence of devotional bhakti poetry in the medieval period and the immense attraction which the latter must have held for the immigrant Sufis for its like-mindedness. India has stood for its assimilation of different religious groups due to its openness, non-resistance, acceptance and accommodation of the manifold religious and mystical trends coming from abroad into the already existing multifarious religious systems. The origin and flourishing of Sufism in India can not be understood without and exclusive of the understanding of existence of a parallel native mystic devotional phenomenon called the ' Bhakti poets'. The Bhakti poets were known for their direct approach to God, and for their piety unburdened by schismatic bigotry. Though divided into "nirgun" and 'sagun' Bhakti poets, the latter further bifurcated into Vaishnavite and

¹⁰⁷ Motilal Jotwani. *Sufis of Sindh*. 1986. p 2.

Shaivite bhaktism; they cohere in their ultimate urge for communion with the supreme lord, although their paths varied.

Like the Sufi poets, the Bhakti poets practiced and endorsed a mystic path which was un-official, dissident, and alternate and a mark of protest against official Vedantism. Vedantic texts were available in Sanskrit, the language of the elite Brahminical class. The protest against official religion was a protest against the corruption exhibited by the detractors of religion and deliberate mis-interpretation by the self-serving Brahminical clergy. Sufi mysticism is understood as grounded upon a similar protest against Islamic ecclesiastical appropriation of the definition and practice of religion, foregrounding its mystical elements to the muffling up of the pristine message of The Holy Quran. Dr. Motilal Jotwani in *Sufis of Sindh* further explains how the genuine Sufi mystics outgrew the boundaries of "zuhd, ibadat, taqwa and riyadat" set by the founders of the various Sufi orders. He differentiates between the orthodox rule-book *Silsilah* of Sheikh Muhiyuddin Abdul Qadir Gilan and the doctrine of Wahdah al Wajud of Muhiyuddin ibn Arabi (1165-1240) and explains the latter as taking root in the Indian soil as it is more Indian in character than the former.

Very true, the incipient seeds of Sufism lay in the Holy Quran, where we read the oft-quoted texts:

"God encompasseth all things".
 "He (God) is first. He is last. The manifest, the hidden,
 and who knoweth all things."
 "He is with you wheresoever ye be"
 "We (God) are closer to him (man) than his neck vein"
 "Which ever way ye turn there is the face of God",
 'He is nearer to you than your jugular vein',
 'Every moment he discloses himself in fresh glory',
 and 'everything that exists will in the end return to
 God.'¹⁰⁸

The aforementioned Quranic quotes are a definite pointer towards the unity of being

¹⁰⁸ Motilal Jotwani. *Sufis of Sindh*. 1986. p 5.

but will never be highlighted by a staunch believer of the shariah. Bulleh Shah, who is undaunted in his proclamation of his 'baikaid' (emancipated) sensibility, says:

He offers you the wine of love
 Not bothering about your origin.
 His name is on everyone's lips,
 In you He ever resides.
 He is nearer than the jugular vein
 And with you He ever abides.¹⁰⁹

Latif's mystical system draws upon particular instances of impressions and experiences to a general philosophy of mysticism which entails, not just close approximation to the supreme divine Being but, merger with Him. Jotwani calls Latif "not speculative" but "practical":

...practical in the sense that it teaches love of man for man and depicts the union of the high and the seemingly low. (Punhu and Sasui; Jam and Nuri; Meher and Sohini)¹¹⁰

Motilal Jotwani aptly draws close parallels between Latif's mysticism and Indian monism. Jotwani explains the principle of non-attachment to worldliness and materialism and the realization of 'Brahman' or 'Haqq' as the essence of "atman" or 'ruh' respectively in the Upnishadic and Sufi paradigms. Jotwani explains the path towards such inner realization through the Vedantic precept of Prajapati, embodied in the three syllables: "Da, Da, Da", which referred to the three behavioural principles, "Datta, Dayadhvam, Damayta (give, sympathise and self-control)"¹¹¹. Subservience to the world of senses and a life at the service of the satisfaction of the 'nafs' is a wasteful hunting after an ever-receding mirage of happiness.

Latif's sur "Sorath" demonstrates the joy of giving and the consecutive emancipation from the delusive mirage of ever-receding desires in human life. This

¹⁰⁹ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 191.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p 9.

¹¹¹ Motilal Jotwani. *Sufis of Sindh*. 1986. p 20.

framework of the immortality of God, the immanence of God in all things and God's direct and close connection with the human being is the foundation of Sufi mysticism as well. Latif cites from the *Holy Quran* in the first sur "Kalyan". For instance: 'He is the One, without a peer', is in consonance with the Quranic teachings. He draws upon the Quran and attests the supremacy and the sublimity of the divine being. There is no doubt as to what the Holy Scripture says in this context. But this is the take off point from where Latif moves on to underscore the concept of unity of being. Motilal Jotwani, in *Sufis of Sindh*, aptly cites other such expressions picked up directly from the Quran: 'He, the first and the last, and the apparent and the hidden', and 'wherever you turn, you will behold the countenance of God', and "God encompasseth all things".¹¹² This framework of the immanence of God in all things and God's direct connection with human being, where there is a reciprocal love between God and man,

"When a devotee seeks me, I also reciprocate his love
and become his ear by which he hears, his eye by which
he sees, his hands by which he works and his feet by
which he walks"¹¹³

is the foundation of Sufi mysticism. However, the Sufi amplification and emphasis on this mystical note distanced it from the orthodox ritualistic elements in Islam. In a state of ecstasy, when Mansur al Hallaj declares *ana 'l Haq*, 'I am the Truth', he is hanged in 923AD. Similarly Bayazid Bistami's utterance: "I am God's limit. I am the sacred pen used by the Almighty" and when Farid-ud-din Attar exclaims 'Man Khudayam, man khudayam, man khuda', 'I am God, I am God', these Islamic mystics feel alienated from official Islam but find greater affinity with the Indian devotional mystic and Bhakti strand. The ultimate aim of Sufi and Indian Bhakti mysticism was the attainment of direct communion with God. Rabbia of Basri professes selfless love:

If I love thee for fear of Hell
Condemn me to the fires of Hell,
If I love thee for the sake of Heaven,
Deprive me of the bliss for all times...

¹¹² Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. vol 1. 2003. p 118.

¹¹³ Ibid. p 28.

I crave for thy communion
Withhold not thy everlasting beauty.¹¹⁴

And Ali Haider proclaims:

The One who has killed his ego
Does not care for your Heavens.¹¹⁵

These poets of Arabic Islamic descent found greater affinity with the devotional poets included in the *Gurmat*:

Raj na chahoon, mukti na chahoon
Man preet charan kamla re¹¹⁶
Neither dominion, nor salvation I desire
My heart loves your comely feet. (Translation mine)

The import is that the devotee's heart, wallowing in adoration of the Supreme Lord, longs for a glimpse of His divine feet. Where earlier human fealty or devotion towards the Divine Being was predicated upon fear of God or on an immediate return for the human prayers and offerings to the divine realm, Sufi framework of human devotion was founded on unconditional and unmitigated love between the deity and the devotee. This trait was shared by the Sufi seeker and the Indian 'Sadhak' alike.

The much debated question of direct interaction between Sufi and Bhakti paradigms is still equivocal. But it can not be denied that *Guru Granth Sahib*, posited as the last Sikh Guru in the legacy of the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, contains verses of Sufi Saints like Baba Farid as much as Bhakti poets like Raidas, Kabir and Namdev. An affirmative confluence of ideas is inscribed in a text which incorporates poets irrespective of their communal, caste or class identity. The Hindu-Muslim ideational freeze breaks down in the inability of posterity to pin down poets like Raidas and Kabir as either Hindus or Muslims. In a happy confluence with this legacy, saint poets like Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah are open disclaimers of the Hindu/Muslim freeze.

¹¹³ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 11.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p 11.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p 11.

CHAPTER 3

**SHAH ABDUL LATIF'S LIFE, PHILOSOPHY IN THE
MATRIX OF THE CONTEMPORARY SUFI
POETS OF SINDH**

3.1 Life**3.1.1 Childhood**

Biographies of early saint poets tend to be legend-ridden due to saint worship by the multitude. It is not easy to distinguish real facts from hagiographic adulations. We need not forget that poets under consideration belong to the oral tradition. There is a resultant lack of unanimity regarding the verses attributed to them as well as the biographical records and chronological events connected with their lives. Shah Abdul Latif (b.1690 A.D.) is known to have taken birth in a village called Bhaipur, in Hala ta 'luqa, Hyderabad, Sindh. Latif's extraordinary mystical sensibility made him decline the knowledge of the alphabet beyond 'Alif', because 'alif', the first letter of the alphabet, signified 'Allah'. Since the next letter 'Be' meant 'without', Latif expressed the undesirability of going beyond 'alif' to gain any knowledge 'without' Allah. Shah Abdul Latif's lineage goes back to the great Sufi saint poet Shah Abdul Karim. It is said of this great ancestor that he was sent to the local 'maktab' when he was six years old. When directed by the teacher to collect firewood from the forest and to learn lessons on the way,

While his [Karim's] friends remembered lessons, he
remembered God alone.¹

Latif himself is known to have refused to learn the alphabet beyond 'Alif', as a sign of revolt against erudition and textual scholarship as a means to attain God. Though Shah Habib, Latif's father applauded this gesture and rejoiced at his son's perspicuous mystical instinct, Latif's oeuvre displays a lack of possibility that he was unlettered or unread or ignorant of the great mystical Sufi scholars preceding him. S. M. Jhangiani cites verses like:

¹ Motilal Jotwani. *Shah Abdul Latif: His Life and Works*. 1975. p 17.

Katib! Likheen jian , layo lamu alifa sein
 (O writer! As you write the letter lamu (L) with Alif (A)
 within)
 Asan sajanu tian, rahio ahe ruha mein
 (So does the beloved dwell within my soul)²

Further, Latif's verses evince a fair knowledge of verses from the Quran, as well as poets of different languages like " Rumi, Attar, Sadi, Hafiz, Khushro, Ghani etc (Persian); Sheikh Farid (Multani), Baba Nanak (Punjabi), Kabir (Hindi), Mira (Rajasthani), Shah Abdul Karim and Miyun Inat (Sindhi)."³ Hence, Latif is to be eulogised as widely read and not as unlettered. His lack of interest in learning is a way of expressing his belief in inner faith in the divine Beloved to the secondariness of bookish learning and a display of pedanticism. Latif stood for emancipation from restrictive religious formalism and for sartorial freedom. He wore a simple loose dress like a sanyasi. Many of Latif's portraits show him sitting in humble contemplative posture under a tree with folded hands and legs, face poised between them, in a mood of intense longing and desire for the divine Beloved. Dr Aruna Jethwani presents a vivid portrait of Latif in a picturesque verse:

He rose,
 from sunlit Sindh;
 he chose,
 to roam,
 the desert and domes,
 hills and homes,
 with the yogis.
 He searched his goal;
 in the village folks,
 he found his soul,
 He became a Sufi...
 Huddled,
 under the bare tree,
 wrapped,
 in woollens, still free.

² S.M. Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986. p 6.

³ Ibid. p 8.

He scorched his soul,
 in sun...
 His longing tore
 the Beloved's sky.
 His yearning,
 a long moaning.
 His thirst,
 a stream of pain.
 His soul,
 knowingly slain,
 he was a Sufi.
 He was a saint!⁴

The verse beautifully highlights the central features of the revered saint poet, who charted the course of his mystical journey through an act of free choice; went in search of truth and god-realization through self-realization; a non-conformist, carefree of the societal norms and religious formalisms. In a single-minded pursuit of the divine Beloved, he traversed "desert and domes, hills and homes", felt at home in the company of the homeless yogis and registered his inmost thoughts in the language of the village folk, eventually expressing it all in the *Risalo*, a mystical effusion of the Sindhi folk tales from the deepest recesses of his heart.

3.1.2 Latif's Love and Marriage: 'Ishq-i-Majazi' to 'Ishq-i-Haqiqi'

Latif's love and marriage became emblematic of the Sufi ascent from 'ishq-i-majazi' to 'ishq-i-haqiqi'. At the age of nineteen, Latif fell heart and soul in love with the daughter of Beg Arghun. Till then, Beg Arghun revered Latif's father as his spiritual mentor and family physician. On one occasion, when Beg Arghun desired Shah Habib to visit the former to heal his ailing daughter, Shah Habib sent his son instead, on account of his own illness. On his visit to Mughal Beg Arghun's house, Latif fell in love with the girl at the sight of her beautiful fingers and uttered the words:

Janhji anuri sayad je hatha mein, tanh khe na lahar na lodo
 (One whose little finger is in Sayyid's hand, need fear no
 evil)⁵

⁴ Aruna Jethwani. *The Sufi: Shah Abdul Latif*. 2013. p 14.

⁵ S.M. Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986.p 9.

Latif's blessings cured the girl soon. However, her father got so incensed that he assured that Latif's family had to leave Kotri. After the death of Beg Arghun, Latif married the same girl reverently called Tajul-Mukhaadrat (crown of the chaste diamonds)⁶.

During the interregnum between Latif's first rendezvous with his lady-love and his marriage with her, Latif wandered far and wide in his quest for eternal love. The period of separation from his beloved intensified the mystical instinct in Latif. Leaving his family, Latif ventured on a spiritual odyssey. Without care for food and comfort, Latif carried on his mystical quest like Sasui, the protagonist of the Sindh folk tale, whose intense longing for her Beloved Punhu is expressed in Sur "Sasui: Hussaini" hence:

In hot and cold incessantly
Walk on, and do not wait,
At full of night you may not see
The tracks of him you seek.⁷

Latif's stifled attempt at attaining his earthly beloved transformed into an intense longing for the divine Beloved and a deep-seated hankering for eternal and everlasting love. This is how Latif's mystical journey becomes an embodiment of ascension from 'ishq-i-majazi' to 'ishq-i-haqiqi'. Latif travelled far and wide in the company of yogis. Having renounced the barriers of religion and communal parochialism, Latif visited Kali temple at Ganja Takar, a hill near Hyderabad, Sindh. Full of praise for this religious place, Latif writes in "Sur Khahori" of the *Risalo*:

Those who the bare hills came to know
No more for harvests cared--

⁶ S.M. Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986. p 9

⁷ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 136. The original verse in devnagri as produced by Dr. Motilal Jotwani in *Shah Latif ka kavya* reads as follows:

rrhv Fk/hv dkrfg] dkrfgs oy fog.k th]

मता थिए उँदाहि, पेरू न लही पिरिअ जो।

xjeh gk] l nhz gk] pyrh jgk cBus dk l e; ugha gk dgha vj/k u gks

tk; vjg fiz re ds inkd u ik l dka

(Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 171)

To Ganja-hills they longed to go
Lahutis to become.⁸

In the company of yogis, Latif wore an ochre dress and proceeded to visit Hinglaj, a Hindu pilgrimage in Baluchistan in Las Bela. S.M.Jhangiani and Dr. Motilal Jotwani trace Latif's literal journey and how nature influenced Latif and stirred his imagination so as to bring alive the folk-lore of Sindh. Impressed by nature at its best at Kinjhar lake, Latif mustered a live vision of the folk-tale of Noori and Jam Tamachi, a beautiful register of which is made in "Sur Kamod" of Latif's *Risalo*:

Hethi jaru, mathe manaru, kandhi-a kaunra tarani
Variye vahundani, kinjharu khathuri thiye.⁹
Upon the waters transparent,
along the banks float lotus flowers,
And all the lake rich fragrance showers
As sweet as musk when spring winds blow.¹⁰

Latif envisions Jam Tamachi's palace on the Hellaya hill touching the Kinjhar lake. The beautiful sight ignited Latif's imagination.

Hethi jaru, mathe manaru, pase mein vanaraha,
Ace vane vica mein, Tamachi-a je saa,
Lage uttara vaa, kinjharu hindoro thiye.¹¹
Blossoms above, waters below and trees aside,
She sails to and from Tamachi's delight,
When the north wind blows, Kinjhar wears a cradel's
sight.¹²

Latif also happens to cross Bhambhor, the setting for the folk tale of Sasui and Punhu. Latif's own exertions in a frantic search for eternal love reminded him of Sasui of the folk-tale and her ordeals in her quest for Punhu:

⁸ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 80.

⁹ S.M.Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986. p 12.

¹⁰ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 115.

¹¹ S.M.Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986. p 12.

¹² *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 80.

Karira doongra kahe ghani, jiti barpata sujan bairanu
Datani, dahapa visri, thiya harifa-i-hairanu,
sasui-a langhyo, sayid cae, muhabat sein maidanu,
Janho Aryani agwanu, tanhi khe kanhe baka bahir
mein.¹³

The hills are harsh, the dust is great;
And where the mighty deserts swell
The wise are shorn of their wisdom
And even the cunning love their senses,
Sasui crossed the plain, so says Sayyid
One whose guide is Aryani (Punhu)
Need fear no trouble in travel.¹⁴

Jhangiani enumerates Latif's itinerary through Saurashtra and his visit to the Dwarka temple of Dwarkadhish, Sri Krishna. Here is the kernal of Sufi mysticism which equally revers the Hindu temple of Hinglaj and Dwarika, the abode of Lord Krishna. In the company of yogis during his travels, Latif had an opportunity to understand the merits of a true yogi and their spiritual instincts. In his "Sur Khahori", "Sur Purab" and "Sur Ramkali", Latif distinguishes a true yogi from a fake one:

With hunger yogis pack their bags
Preparing for revelry...
By tempting foods they were not moved,
And out they pour so lustily
The 'thirst' to drink; their minds they flog
Until like beaten flax they be...
Lo through long wastes they wade, to see
At last fertility and life!¹⁵

The yogi's keen interest is not in the here and now, the immediate, the comfort zone of the transitory and the empirical world of experiences. Their hearts are inclined

¹³ S.M.Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986. p 13.

¹⁴ Ibid. p 13.

¹⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 71.

towards the limitless realm, the infinite, the eternal and the abiding reality, camouflaged from the worldly eye:

Where there is no height, no heaven,
And of the earth no trace;
Where moon doth not rise, nor sun
Doth ever show his face;
There yogis see their limit,
And see their resting place--
Their clues reach far, till now their gaze
Found in negation Reality!¹⁶

Negation of the phenomenal world opens the way to the 'Reality', the eternal realm of union with God. The physical and the sensuous needs to be renounced in order to attain the eternal and abiding 'Truth'. A true yogi is deaf or blind to worldly reality and his heart is set beyond these. Latif remarks in "Sur Khahori" of his *Risalo*:

And deaf you have to be, the call
Of Reality to hear--
Make yourself blind, so that the dear
Beloved you may see--¹⁷

Having realized the true value of the yogis, Latif deplores the yogis' leaving him behind in his sleep. He wails in "Sur Ramkali":

Today the yogis disappeared,
Remembering them, I wept whole night;
Those whom I searched and so revered,
Are vanished never to return.¹⁸

Latif also visited the Girinar fort which was reminiscent of King Rai Diyach of Junagarh, who kept his promise and surrendered his head for the unparalleled music of Beejal:

¹⁶ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 76.

¹⁷ Ibid. p 78.

¹⁸ Ibid p 74.

*Gulu chino Girinarajo, pitaanu thiyoon pitini,
 Sahsein Soratha jahiriyoon, ubhiyoon osarini,
 Cota carna hatha mein, siru singariyo diyani,
 Nariyoon nada karen; "raja rati ramagayo".¹⁹*
 The flower of Girinar is plucked;
 The town is plunged in mourn and pain,
 Hundreds like Sorath stand and raise
 Their lamentations all in vain--
 The minstrel holding lock, receives
 The prince's head chant the sad refrain,
 'last night the Raja passed away'.²⁰

Here, critics like Jhangiani speculate that Latif could not have missed the highest peak of Girnar hills, called Gorakhnath Sikhar, named after Gorakhnath, a great site of pilgrimage for the yogis. Latif feels mesmerized by the ethic of the 'jogi'. The sentiment finds expression in "Sur Ramkali".

Further, it was Latif's visit to Khambhat, and his wandering through the desert of Thar, which conjured the image of Marui and her travails in search of her beloved. The impact of Latif's wide travels is made palpable in the heart-felt rendering of the experiences of the protagonists of folk-tales in the *Risalo* of Shah Abdul Latif. This is indubitably the impact of the topography which fires the imagination of a saint-poet like Latif, who, like the British romantic poet, William Wordsworth, let the impressions of the innocence and power of nature exert itself on them.²¹ Wordsworth applauds the recuperative influence of the world of nature. A worshipper of nature,

¹⁹ S.M.Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986. p 14.

²⁰ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 57.

²¹ William Wordsworth admonishes his younger sister in his famous poem, "Tintern Abbey" to let the world of nature exert its benign influence on her, so that "solitude, or fear, or pain or grief" cannot become hindrances on the path to righteousness and moral rectitude:

Nature never did betray
 The heart that loved her...for she can so inform
 The mind that is within us, so impress
 With quietness and beauty...
 that all which we behold
 Is full of blessings
 (William Wordsworth. "Tintern Abey". Web. 20 August 2017.
 <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>>)

Wordsworth's high pantheism endows nature with the immanence of the divine essence. The aura summoned by phrases like "Sweet sounds and harmonies", "solitary walk", "misty mountain-winds" blowing against the wanderer, are very much evocative of Shah Latif's setting in the folk-lore of Sasui-Punhu. The consummation of both the journeys is also same: "warmer love", "with far deeper zeal of holier love". The parallels may be completely inadvertent and incidental. Yet, the mystical framework seems to overlap the two completely different contextual and heuristic moments. Both the experiences seem to intersect at certain psychological and transcendental levels. From whence we arrive at such parallel numinous mystical states is difficult to explain, yet there is a definite feeling about the common springs for the mystical underpinnings of life.

Latif left his earthly abode in a serene gesture and truly mystical instinct of silence and withdrawal from worldly discourses. Having receded into seclusion for twenty one days, during which period Latif composed his final composition "Sur Kedaro", Latif passed away in peace. Documents Jhangiani:

When he came out of his solitary chamber, he took a bath and, wearing a chaddar, went into communion with God. He asked the musicians to play music, which continued for three days. And when it was stopped, it was found that Shah had left his mortal coil. He died in 1751 AD.²²

3.2 Shah Abdul Latif and the folk- narratives of Sindh: Omar- Marui, Sasui-Punhu, Beejal- Raidiyach, Lila- Chanesar, Suhini- Sahar, Mumal- Rano.

L.H.Ajwani, in chapter three of *History of Sindhi Literature*, discusses "the raw material of Sindhi Literature" as originating either in "religion" or in "popular legends":

The bulk of Sindhi Literature owes its origin either to religion or to popular legends. The religion of the Sindhis, whether of Muslims or Hindus, is not orthodox Islam or orthodox Hinduism, but a rather heterodox

²² S.M.Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986. p 17.

worship of saints and holy men and observance of rituals which may be dubbed as superstitious.²³

A glance at the popular folk-narratives evince that they are invariably woven/intricate with Hindu as well as Muslim characters and rituals. This non-exclusivity of either Hindu or Muslim participation in the folk tales of Sindh contributes to its open-mined and inclusive sensibility. The most prominent example is the legend of the river-deity, Khwaja Khizr, also called Zindah Pir, whose shrine at Sukkur is revered by both Hindu and Muslim devotees. The Mujawars or keepers of the shrine are also both Hindus and Muslims.

The folk narratives of Sindh are invested with mystical intonations by poets like Shah Latif as well as some of his predecessors like Shah Abdul Karim. The folk-lore of Omar-Marui immortalized in Shah Latif's Sur "Omar and Marui". Marui betrothed to a simple village folk, Maru, is kidnapped by King Omar and presented with irresistible materialistic temptations. Marui, steadfast in her allegiance towards her native land and towards her beloved Maru, rejects all worldly lures. In mystical terms the folk-lore is translated as Marui's realization of her original belongingness to the King of kings, remembrance of her primeval connection with the divine realm and the need to resist worldly blandishments:

When Be was not yet said, nor was
 There flesh and bone scheme or plan;
 When Adam had not yet received
 His form, was not yet man;
 Then my realization began,
 My recognition too.
 "Am I not thy Lord?" came a voice;
 A voice so sweet and clear;
 And I said: "yes" with all my heart
 When I this voice did hear;

²³ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 19.

And with this bond I did adhere
That moment to my love.”²⁴

The folk-tale of Sasui-Punhu was popular in Sind but its immense impact made it popular in Punjab as well. Sasui is born in the Hindu Brahmin household. On learning the prognostication that Sasui will marry a Muslim boy, her father floats her down the river in a box and abandons the baby. The box floats down to Bhambhor, where a washerman named Mahomed, rescues the baby. The child grows up lovingly in the household of the washer-man. Bhambhor was the interface between Makran and Tatta and tradesmen travelled from Makran to Tatta frequently for the purpose of trade. Hearing about Sassui's unsurpassed beauty, Punhun, the son of Ari Jan, ruler of Makran, comes to Bhambhor in the guise of a merchant. Smitten by Sasui's beauty, Punhun asks for her hand in marriage. Her father, Mahomed agrees on the condition that Punhun lives in probation, becomes one of them and gives up his patrimony. Punhun completes the required period of probation, gets married to Sasui and starts living with them, having accepted their life-style. Punhun is unwilling to return of his own free will. When Punhun's family back home comes to know about this turn of events, they plan to kidnap Punhun at night when Sasui is fast asleep. Sasui wakes up to repent her heedlessness of the sounds of camels and the kidnappers. She goes in search of Punhun and wanders in the mountainous terrains on the way to Makran. Sasui's heartache, distress and frenzied quest for Punhun has found spiritual asceticism in Sindhi literature. Miracles happen on Sasui's way from Bhambhor to Makran. Folklore recounts a water fountain spouting from a place where Sasui desired to quench her thirst. On meeting the goatherd, Sasui enquires about her Punhun. The goatherd tries to defile the girl. Sasui prays to God to preserve her honour and the earth opens up to rescue the maid. The hem of her garment remains tugged on the surface of the earth. The goatherd feels ashamed. Feeling penitent and as a gesture of atonement, the goatherd builds a tomb for Sasui, himself becoming “a ‘Mujawar’ or the keeper of the shrine of the holy one whom he had tried to molest”.²⁵ Separated from Sasui, Punhun behaves like a mentally deranged person. His father sends him back to Bhambhor. On seeing Sasui's grave and recognizing the hem of her garment,

²⁴ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 179.

²⁵ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 40.

Punhun wishes for union with Sasui. The tomb becomes a site of pilgrimage for both Hindus as well as Muslims, for people of Sindh as well as Multan.

The folk narrative of Rai Diyach and Beejal emerges in Latif's "Sur Sorath". King Rai Diyach is known to have ruled in Girnar in Junagarh. Diyach's sister is told that her son will slay his maternal uncle, king Diyach. She hands over the baby to the nurse commanding her to kill the baby. The nurse consigns the child to a box and floats it in the river. The box floats down to the territory of Anairai, who adopts the child as his own. The baby, named Bijal, grows up to become an adept player of the harp, 'chang'. In between, an incident happens. The beautiful maid, Sorath, about to wed Anairai, Bijal's monarch, is intercepted and wedded to Rai Diyach. King Anairai circulates a plate full of diamonds around the city with the condition that whoever would bring the severed head of king Rai Diyach could keep the booty. Bijal's wife accepts the gift, positing unmitigated faith in Beejal's capabilities. Beejal does not have a choice but to perform the needful act. He accomplishes the same with the irresistible power of his mesmerizing music. King Rai Diyach, fortified inside his palace in Junagarh, listens to Beejal's music, invites him inside and asks him to play for the king for a number of days. King Diyach, entranced, asks Beejal to demand a reward. Beejal asks for the king's head as the reward. Latif transports the story to a mystical plane. The price for Beejal's divine music is none less than the king's head, his ego and self-centred consciousness. King Rai Diyach's act of surrender to Beejal, and renunciation of his ego makes him accomplish a sense of oneness among the ethereal music, the musician and the human aspirant avidly searching for union with the eternal and the ethereal realm of divine effulgence.

The legend of Lila-Chanesar belongs to the time-period of the Sumra ruler, Chanesar, who ruled from 1288-1306 AD, according to *Tahfat-al-Kiram*.²⁶ Lila, the queen of King Chanesar, is attracted by the 'naulakha' necklace, worth nine lakhs, and accepts that in exchange for Chanesar. Kounroo, daughter of Rai Khangar, the Solanki ruler of Lakpat spends one night with King Chanesar. Chanesar becomes outrageous on the realization of what Lila had done. He rejects Lila, who returns to her parental house. Later, Chanesar happens to visit her city to attend a wedding ceremony. Lila dons the robe of a

²⁶ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 30.

dancer and dances in front of the gathering to win the heart of one and all. Chanesar, overwhelmed at the sight of the highly repentant Lila, accepts her back. Lila falls dead in his arms. Aggrieved, Chanesar also dies.

While the legends of Lila-Chanesar, Umar-Marui and Mumal-Rano are temporarily placed in the period of the rule of the Sumras, the legend of Nur-Tamachi belongs to the succeeding rule of the Sammas. Tamachi falls in love with the daughter of a fisherman, “while he was on a trip on the waters of lake Keenjhar, situated between Tatta and Jherruck at the bottom of Hallaya Hill.”²⁷ Smitten by her beauty, Jam Tamachi names her ‘Nuri’ (light) and marries her. Nuri remains humble and serene in the face of the condescension and contempt of women in the palace of Tamachi. Tamachi commands the women of the court to dress up in their finest attire so that he can choose with whom to go out. Nuri drapes a simple dress, unlike the shimmering robes of the aristocratic queens. Tamachi chooses the simple beauty, Nuri, to go out with him because of her “simplicity, charm, elegance and beauty”²⁸:

She was radiant with her own god-given beauty, and devoid of malice and jealousy. He chose her for his companion and elevated her to the dignity of queen regent.²⁹

The folk tale of Suhini and Sahar is placed “in the reign of Shah Jahan, a few decades before the birth of Shah Latif.”³⁰ The tale of Suhini and Sahar is claimed by Sindhis as native to their land, though some regard the Punjabi folk-lore of Sohini-Mahiwal as the original version of the Sindhi rendition. Owing to the oral tradition, the versions of the tale are numerous. In the Sindhi version of Suhni-Mehar, Suhni, the daughter of a potter is married to a kinsman names Dum. She falls in love with the buffalo-keeper (‘Mehar’), whose name is ‘Sahar’. Incensed about the relationship of Suhni and Sahar, the potter gets the daughter married and Sahar, the buffalo-keeper is dismissed. Sahar positions himself on the opposite bank of the river. Suhni goes to meet her lover

²⁷ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 35

²⁸ Ibid. p 35

²⁹ Ibid. pp 35-36.

³⁰ Ibid. p 38.

every night, crossing the turbulent river with a baked earthen pot. One day, Sasui's sister-in-law replaces the baked pot with an unbaked pot. The pot dissolves mid-way. Suhni calls for Sahar, who also plunges into the turbulent river. Both Suhni and Sahar find solace and union in the lap of river Sindhu forever. L.H.Ajwani writes:

Three entities regarded as separate entities became one and the same, the three whose names all began with the letter 'S'—Suhni, Sahar (Mehar) and Sair (the ocean-like river Sindhu).³¹

The legend of Mumal-Rano is temporally placed in the “14th C when Raja Nand ruled at Mirpur, Mathelo.”³² The legend of Mumal Rano is temporally placed in the “14th C when Raja Nand ruled at Mirpur, Mathelo”³³. Mumal declines Rano's love but later feels mesmerized by Rano's charisma, after he turns into an ascetic. Mumal gets married to Rano, but Rano has become an itinerant yogi and leaves Mumal behind. In order to satisfy her bodily desire for Rano, Mumal sleeps with her sister dressed as a man. Rano gets to know about Mumal's supposed adultery deserts her. Now it's Mumal's tryst with destiny. Deep remorse is followed by prolonged introspection. Mumal's mind gets liberated from the bondages of time, space and material existence. She comes to a realization that she is not apart from her Beloved Rano; that the feverish seeking after bodily and worldly desires, is an unworthy pursuit. She sees divine majesty everywhere and finds Rano seated within her heart.

3.3 Poetical enunciations of Shah Abdul Latif

Dr Aruna Jethwani, in her book *The Sufi: Shah Abdul Latif*, eulogises Latif's *Risalo* hence:

Shah Jo *Risalo* is a unique masterpiece of poetry. Because it is not mere poetry but the philosophy of life put to music and exalted as spiritual Beauty.³⁴

³¹ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 37

³² Ibid. p 37

³³ Ibid.p 37

³⁴ Aruna Jethwani. *The Sufi: Shah Abdul Latif*. 2013.p 24.

The thirty ‘surs’ of the *Risalo* constitute the poet’s intense longing for the divine Beloved. Shah Latif’s poetry is termed by Elsa Kazi as “impressionist par excellence”.³⁵ Latif does not recount episodes and folk-tales in their particular details. He dwells upon the significance and the impression of those incidents on the reader/listener:

These episodes and legends employed by Latif, are but
pegs on which he hangs his divine themes.³⁶

Keeping in mind the fact that Shah Latif’s poetical enunciations are spontaneous effusions of one drenched to the core in the love of the divine Beloved, it is not to be forgotten that Latif never wrote his verses. The available compilations are a result of the written records of Latif’s disciples and admirers. Hence, variations amongst the different versions of Latif’s verses are natural.

3.3.1 Poetic Form of the *Risalo*

Shah’s *Risalo* comprises of two poetic forms. One is the ‘doha’ (rhymed couplet), also called ‘dohira’ in Sindhi. The ‘doha’ was employed by the bhakti poets. Shah Latif’s predecessors like Kazi Qazan and Shah Abdul Karim also adopted the doha form. A ‘sur’ is a complete poem comprising of a number of dohas. Each sur is divided into cantos. Each canto is concluded by a ‘wae’, a conclusive short poem which acts as an epilogue to the canto. This epilogue or wae contained repetitive refrain after every couplet and builds up the compendium of the canto. Rhyme is an important feature of the ‘doha’. Here, the rhyme is not restricted to the last syllable, instead, oftentimes to two or more syllables. Explains Tirathram Hotchand:

Each line of the doha contains twenty-four matras or
instants or pulse-beats...A matra denotes a length of
time occupied in the utterance of a short vowel.³⁷

Shah Latif employs the doha with his own emancipated mystical sensibility. His poetic fancy makes his stanzas extend upto nine or ten lines “due to his free and

³⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 241.

³⁶ Ibid. p 241

³⁷ Tirathdas Hotchand. *Rhythms of the Lower Indus*. 1988. p 74

frequent flights of fancy and exigencies of time.”³⁸

The spontaneity of Latif is evinced in his non-adherence to fixed form and metre. The mood and emotion of the poet order the line length, the rhyme and the length of the stanza. The reader as well, overwhelmed by the musical spontaneity does not get entangled in a threadbare analysis of the metrical form. The thought and the mood of the poet govern the employment of refrain and variations thereupon. The form of the *Risalo* is not, therefore, preconceived just as the thought is not subject to conscious intellectual activity. The *Risalo* is a result of “genuine inspiration and immediate response”³⁹ of the poet. In doing so, the form and the content of the *Risalo* cohere into a spontaneous and organic whole. Even the thought processes of the saint poet are not consciously compiled into the composition of the *Risalo*, instead

...it is the unity complete and organic of fifty odd years utterances as if by magic becoming organically united, and not only giving up a complete picture of the poet’s soul at different stages but life of the whole humanity as it would be lived by the highest and the stages it would necessarily pass through when it has been coming into the world with the highest ‘hereditary capital’.⁴⁰

The message of the *Risalo*, enthused with mystical poetic effusions and with symbolism leading human being to the ideal realm, inspires the soul to seek the divine source of his existence. The episodes of the *Risalo* are presented as “musical themes”⁴¹ called ‘surs’. The first sur, sur “kalyan”, dwells upon thematic delineation off the contours of ‘peace’ (“kalian”). Both in the Islamic mode of offering prayer as well as the invocation of God in “Japji” of *Guru Granth Sahib*, the sur begins with a praise of the supreme Godhead, “the one Creator”, “Lord of the Universe”.⁴² The sur posits the doctrine of emanation, “From one many to being came”⁴³ as well as transcendence, “many, but Oneness is.”⁴⁴ The non-

³⁸ Tirathdas Hotchand. *Rhythms of the Lower Indus*. 1988. p 74.

³⁹ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 224.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p 231.

⁴¹ Ibid. p 241.

⁴² Ibid. p 31.

⁴³ Ibid. p 32.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p 32.

dualistic conclusion is built up in the succeeding lines: “Reality is ‘One.’”⁴⁵ Sur “Yaman Kalyan (Path to Peace)”, posits the lord himself as the healer, the physician. He can recuperate human pain and suffering caused by separation from the divine source:

Thou art the friend, the Healer thou
For every ailment balm dost send.⁴⁶

The earthly lover expresses a deep feeling of complete submission to this divine friend:

Strike friend -thy hand raise, favour me—
Hold not your hand, and should I die
By such death I shall honoured be...⁴⁷

Along with the sense of absolute submission, the poet invests human being with amazing capabilities. The humble seeker does not spurn from learning life lessons even from a minuscule moth:

If you call yourself a moth,
Then come, put out the fires away,
Passion has so many baked
But you roast passion’s self today—⁴⁸

It is commendable to efface oneself in front of God’s divine will. When it comes to becoming a moth, the act of self-immolation has as its concomitant killing one’s passions, desires and egotism. Human being vanquishes his lower desires (‘nafs’). This is the anthropocentric universe, where Latif posits human being as a self-fashioner, not by succumbing to the compulsive bodily desires, but through self-imposed discipline and strong will-power. Sur “Khambhat-III (Haven)” dwells upon fleshly desires as a hindrance in reaching the divine Beloved. Adolescence brings with it fresh anxieties and desires. The poet feels nostalgic about childhood, which is free from all dilemmas and attraction for physical desires, which John Keats terms as “the

⁴⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 32.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p 35.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p 35.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p 38

weariness, the fever and the fret”⁴⁹ of worldly pursuits. The poet compares the physical bodily self with the camel, who gets diverted, and keeps looking back, unable to remain steady on the prescribed path:

My camel, look not back, for you
‘t is shame to waver so;
Be steady and resolute...⁵⁰

In Sur “Sorath-IV (King and Minstrel)”, Latif transports the folk-lore of king Rai Diyach and Sorath to a mystical plane. King Rai Diyach is enchained by Sorath, the queen emblematic of worldly riches and glamour. Beejal, a musician, plays a musical instrument mesmerizing the highly delighted king. As a reward, Beejal refuses worldly rewards:

Not wealth like this, but head of Raja do I claim.⁵¹

The king, purged of all worldly desires, egotism and pride, grants Beejal his wish:

O friend, my head is only bone;
An empty, empty bone—
If thousand heads my neck would own
I’ll cut them all for thee!⁵²

Sur “Asa”-V meaning hope, presents the inefficacy of the physical sensual faculties in bringing a realization of the divine Beloved.

Be silent—do not move your lips;
Your eyes do close, your hearing stay...
Drink not your fill...
And then a glimpse you may
Of image that your mind’s depth holds-⁵³

A body brimming with the satiety of the physical sensual faculties does not have the capacity and the space to entertain “a glimpse” of the love of One. It is only with the

⁴⁹ John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale” web. 15 Feb 2019. <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems>>

⁵⁰ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 44.

⁵¹ Ibid. p 55.

⁵² Ibid. p 56.

⁵³ Ibid. p 62

“‘seeing’ eyes”⁵⁴ that the essential non-dualism and the unity of Being becomes palpable. Sur “Pirbhati-VII (Song of Dawn) admonishes the musician to sing at the “King’s door” at the early hours of the “lovely dawn”⁵⁵ and invoke his blessings, instead of roaming purposelessly:

Confounded do you roam...O say
Where were you yesterday?
My minstrel, now no longer loll,
But leave your listless way—
Go to the king’s door, beg and pray
For things of genuine worth!⁵⁶

Sur “Ramkali-VII (yogis)” dwells upon these super-renouncers who eschew their ego, who revel in hunger and destitution, and who give the last crumb of bread to the needy and the poor.

In Sur “Khahori”-VIII (Wandering ascetics), Latif calls them the “hill-ascetics” who seek not the immediate comforts of the material world. Their hearts are set upon “the light... from infinity”.⁵⁷ Sur “Bilawal”-X (The Tune of Life) admonishes the seeker to cleanse oneself of hurtful words and baleful utterances as well as pernicious and negative thoughts. The Sur posits absolute faith in the redemptive power of the Supreme Godhead:

Tarnish of hundreds he’ll erase;
When head he lifts and speaks.⁵⁸

Sur “Sarang-XI (Rain song)” presents rain as the life-giving bestower of happiness and bliss. It quenches the physical thirst for water and enables the fulfilment of the spiritual quest of the human lover. Hence, the rain is literal as well as metaphorical:

⁵⁴ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 63.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p 67.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p 67.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p 77.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p 87.

Though inside all is overcast,
 Outside from every cloud is free...
 Lightenings mature within, in whom
 Love doth reside eternally...
 Their eyes shall never rainless be
 In whom thought of Beloved reigns.⁵⁹

The theme of “Suriraag-XII” connects with Sindhi traders who sail off to distant lands to sell merchandise. On the mystical plane, says Latif:

Acquire you such merchandise
 Which time corrupteth not”⁶⁰

Laden with “ware of ‘service great’”⁶¹, the sailors are bound to evade all perils and dangers. Here is Latif’s call to eschew evil ways and rake the fire of love, in order to reach the divine Beloved. Sur “Samudi-XIII (Mariners)” presents the plight of the mariners’ wives who feel disconsolate because their husbands are off to distant lands for trade. But those mariner’s wives who “kindle lights” and “worship waters” with hope and faith in God, their husbands are sure to return. Sur “Kamod-XIV (Love Dependent)” dwells upon the folk-lore of Noori, the fisher-maid and Jam Tamachi, a tale of virtue rewarded:

Fie upon maids of princely caste
 who walk stiff-necked, so haughtily-
 praise to the daughter of the lake,
 her true love to the king gave she...
 out of all royal ladies, he,
 the pearl bestowed on the fisher-maid.⁶²

Sur “Sasui:Abri-XV “Tribulations” immortalizes the tribulations of Sasui in quest for her Beloved Punhu. Intense desire for the divine Beloved is posited as a requisite to attainment of the divine Beloved:

⁵⁹ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 98.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p 99.

⁶¹ Ibid. p 101.

⁶² Ibid. p 114.

‘Ah, those that from longing free
How Kech can ever reach?’⁶³

Another qualification for the wish-maker with an intense longing for the divine Beloved is the courage to make sacrifice:

Each doth express a wish, but none
Ready for hunger is...
To walk is not for every one,
Nor make a trip like this—
I take for company, I wish,
One who loves not the ‘Self’.⁶⁴

Sur “Sasui: Desi-XVI (The Native)” expresses Sasui’s strong allegiance towards Punhun:

Do not advise me sisters to
return to home and glee;
because my breath is property
of my Beloved hoat.⁶⁵

Sur “Sasui-Kohiyari—XVII (The Mountain Path)” brings forth the harsh lesson:

O mountain, though you hot have grown
You cannot harm me now;
You may be made of hardest stone
My limbs are iron-made—
‘t is no one’s fault, it is my own
My own strange destiny.⁶⁶

The human seeker has to remain steadfast and stronger than the circumstances. Here we have Latif’s heroines emerging as unwavering amazons.

⁶³ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p118.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p 118.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p 123.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p 127.

Sur “Sasui-Husaini- XIX (The Wailings)” brings forth the complementariness between sorrow and joy:

“Sorrows, joys beauty constitute;
Joys without sorrows spurn;
By virtue of such sorrow’s mood
My love comes to my arms.”⁶⁷

Sur “Leela”-XX dwells upon the folk-lore of Leela-Chanesar and puts premium upon human virtue, instead of the scintillating beauty of gold and diamond. God is the supreme “discerner”. Let us not try to deceive him with false intentions:

In reading thoughts he does excel
Discerner He of hearts.⁶⁸

In Sur “Mumam-Rano”-XXI, Rano, a prince of high virtue falls in love with Mumal, daughter of a minister living at Ludhana, near the river Kak. Mumal declines Rano’s love. The latter becomes an ascetic, a yogi and joins a group of wandering Lahutis. Later Mumal meets the Lahuti, Rano, and falls in love with his mystical magnetism. She becomes Rano’s wife. Rano has to leave to attend to his duties. Mumal is caught in an adulterous relationship with someone else. Rano deserts her, only to return for the repentant Mumal, culminating in a moment of ecstatic union.

In Sur “Barvo Sindhi- XXII” (Beloved), in a tone of rebuke as well as devotion towards the divine Beloved, the human seeker remarks:

As reed doth murmur with distress
When cut, so even I
Cry suddenly for loved one in
A fit of wretchedness;--
O leech, brand not my arm, sickness
And pain are in my heart.⁶⁹
Beloved, all from thee is good!

⁶⁷ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 137.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p 142.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p 154.

But still, 't was not thy way,
 To make me mad with love and then
 Depart with changing mood...⁷⁰

However, the sur ends with the divine Godhead showering love and blessing on the human seeker in the form of loved ones who do not highlight the human seeker's shortcomings. The idea is very similar to Bulleh Shah's kafi:

Bulleh Shahu di preet nyari
*Tare avgunhaare nu.*⁷¹
The lord of bulleh loves so dearly
He redeems even the non-virtuous. (Translation mine)

Latif remarks:

The Generous one, presence of loved ones
 Kindly granted me—
 Their thoughts were to return and
 Re-establish harmony;
 Their way is: though a breech there be
 They never will forsake.⁷²

Sur "Dahar"- XXIII (Desert) dwells upon the transitory aspect of human life as well as transience and evanescence of worldly comforts and possessions. What was once a lake, rich in fish is now a desert valley. The fish-vatchers of yore who impressed their status upon the poor are no more as if they never were. The poet sets the moral:

Today a bridegroom gay and strong—
 Tomorrow lies in grave;
 Building a fort of sand... how long
 Will you be building still.⁷³

In sur "Ghatu"-XXIV (Shark Hunters)", shark-hunting requires concentration,

⁷⁰ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 155.

⁷¹ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay or Path*. 2012. p 170.

⁷² *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 159.

⁷³ *Ibid*. p 164.

patience and “their eagerness for whirlpools, and/ their longing for the deep.”⁷⁴ Similarly the divine Beloved is to be attained by the steadfast and the un-wavering:

In search they into whirlpools got
And to fathomlessness...
They killed the shark; with happiness
now beam fishermen’s eyes.⁷⁵

In Sur “Kapaitie”- XXV (Spinner)”, the poet admonishes the maid to weave incessantly with dedication, with humility and without pride. Human life is short and there is no time to waste. If the spinner is humble, the connoisseurs will not reject her yarn even if it is not perfect. The poet deplores a lack of spinners or God-seekers in the present materialistic ethos.

Wool is my tunic, I proceed
To spinning yard... alas,
No single spinner breathing was
They had gone to spin for aye.⁷⁶

In Sur “Rippa”-XXVI (Calamity), a girl complains to her mother about her forsaken love and how “sorrow’s harrowing has swamped my whole being!”⁷⁷ The mother’s advice is not to display her intense desire for her beloved and to hide her love like the potter, who slakes pot in a covered kiln. In Sur “Karayal”- XXVII, we witness the swan as a symbol of the pristine beauty of nature. A beautiful bird, associated with the deep clear waters searching for the pearls, avoids the shallow banks full of cormorants and despicable sea creatures:

The swans divine are those who pick
The pearls from waters pure;
They never soil their beaks with mud;
Some fishes to secure;
In crowds of cormorants, obscure
They are ... world knows them not.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Ibid. p 167.

⁷⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 167.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p 171.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p 172.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p 177.

In, Sur Marui-XXVII, the maid Marui of the folklore remains faithful to her people and her husband and does not succumb to Umar's inordinate desires. Her steadfastness and allegiance to Maru is paradigmatic of the commendable human allegiance towards the divine Beloved, in the face of worldly temptations. Sur "Sohini"- XXIX, presents Latif's most favoured heroine, Sohini. Like Marui and Sasui, Sohini is not to be overwhelmed by indomitable circumstances. She prefers to die for her beloved Sahar. The union happens in the moment of physical death of Sohini and immortalizes the lovers on a mystical plane:

Sahar, Sohini and the sea
Inseparably 'One'—
This ineffable mystery
No one can ever solve.⁷⁹

Eulogizing the *Risalo*, Dr. Aruna Jethwani remarks that the *Risalo* "defies translation"⁸⁰. Transcribing someone else's voice and filtering it through the sieve of the receptor's language is a challenging project. It is the translator's task to remain as loyal as possible to the spirit of the original and to transport those resonances to the target language. A translator of *Risalo* must be able to understand Latif's use of old Sindhi and his intermittent use of Arabic and Persian words and have the poetic acumen of producing similar effect in modern English. Writes Motilal Jotwani:

The words must be "reborn" at a sub-conscious level,
even as the logical process of structuring and editing
continues.⁸¹

The onus on the translator is immense. Yet, it is true that translation is, eventually, trans-creation, since the translator's signature cannot be completely effaced. Jotwani cites A.K.Ramanujan's comment on translation:

A translation has to be true to the translator no less than
to the original. He cannot jump off his own shadow.⁸²

⁷⁹ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965.p 201.

⁸⁰ Aruna Jethwani. *The Sufi: Shah Abdul Latif*. 2013. p 24.

⁸¹ Motilal Jotwani. Introduction. *Shah Abdul Latif: Seeking the Beloved*. Trans. Anju Makhija and Hari Dilgir. 2012. N. Pag.

⁸² Ibid.

A manuscript of the *Risalo* compiled by Latif's followers was preserved at his mousoleum in 1752. In 1866, it was published by Ernest Trumpp in Germany. The British museum preserves a mousoleum edition since 1844. A well-received translation of the *Risalo* by Elsa Kazi was published in 1965. Another translation by Hari Dilgir and Anju Makhija was published by Katha in 2005. A.K.Brohi's introduction to Elsa Kazi's translation of Latif, in an attempt to validate the authenticity and efficacy of Kazi's translation, builds up Kazi's case as follows:

- (i) Elsa Kazi herself writes poetry of substantial merit.
- (ii) She understood the crux and pith of Latif's poetry through detailed discussions with her husband, Mr. I.I.Kazi, a Sindhi scholar, understood as an authority on Latif.
- (iii) Hence Elsa Kazi was equipped with the basic qualification for translating a text: not just sympathy but empathy with the emotion and spirit of the source text.

Still scepticism regarding the authenticity of Kazi's translation is raised on the pretext that she neither knew the language of the source text, nor the language of translation, English. Kazi's mother-tongue is German. However, the problem is laid aside with examples of very successful studies of the message and biographical accounts of Swami Rama Krishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda by Romain Roland, a French writer. How could a French writer who never came into contact with Bengali life and landscape describe them in such meticulous and realistic manner? How come the most comprehensive book on American democracy is written not by an American, but by a French diplomat Tocqueville? The reason is their perspicuous understanding of and sympathy with the subject. Hence, while keeping in mind the great onus of fidelity of the translation to the original text; let us not call a great poet like Latif untranslatable. It would be more of a relegation and devaluation of the saint poet to anonymity and his confinement to Sindhi readership, than a eulogy of his unique versification. A.K.Brohi brings to our notice another important fact from Latif's life which justifies his being translated into another culturally alien language: the fact that Shah Latif enriched Sindhi literature with the rich repository of the *Risalo* in a language to which his family, which migrated from Herat, had come into contact just

two generations back. And yet here was Latif who emerged as "a star of the first magnitude in the firmament of its [Sindhi] literature."⁸³

3.3.2 Shah Latif's *Risalo* as a register of the contemporary socio-cultural framework.

Shah Abdul Latif's temporal framework and the specificities of socio-cultural conditions of his times are interwoven in the fabric of the *Risalo*. The various vocations and the social standing of the people emerge through the delineation of the folk-tales of Sindh. "Sur Kamod" describes the fisher-folk, "Sur- Marui" describes the nomadic goatherds and "Sur Sarang" describes the farmers living in their natural setting in various parts of Sindh, their joys and sorrows, priorities and emotions. The rhythm of their lives is deeply connected with the vagaries of weather conditions and the rhythm of the world of nature. Latif lived among the village folk, observed them closely, drew analogies from everyday life and gave place to them in his verses with mystical intonations. Very much conscious of the needs and longings of his people, the saint poet expresses deep concern for local problems of the people of Sindh. For instance, in "Sur Sarang", Latif expresses a deep concern for the impact of rain on the socio-economic condition of Sindh. Latif's profound affinity with the land of Sindh, its flora and fauna, and its people and their vocations is also revealed:

Season's orchestra is in full swing,
Rain quails pipe tenderly;
Peasants repair their ploughs, herdsmen rejoice with
ecstasy--
my friend in perfect form... O see
Predicts a downpour great!⁸⁴

Although Latif kept himself aloof from the political upheavals of the time, he was very much conscious of social evils pestering human sensibility and which are a plague to human virtue. He deplores social malefactors like hoarders, who cause suffering to the poor and simple-minded people, a practice he must have found rife in

⁸³ A.K.Brohi. Introduction. *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 3.

⁸⁴ Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 96.

his native place. However, the lord Supreme thwarts the intentions of such miscreants by outpouring rain on the land of Sindh. "Sur Sarang", the rain song, is replete with the melody of the song of nature, the pitter-patter rain-fall, as well as the musicality and riot of colours sprinkled in the sky. The saint poet paints the sky of his adored Sindh in lovely hues which are a treat to the imaginative reader:

The cloud, with colours rich and bright
 Paints towers in the skies--
 It brought the violins, zitherns, flutes,
 Tambours that give delight...⁸⁵

And the landscape is imbued with a parallel gusto and cheerfulness, copiousness and prosperity all around:

Season's orchestra's in full swing,
 Fresh flowers ease the mind;
 On mountain-side so green with grass;
 Cattle abundance find;
 Gay herdsmen's wives about their necks
 Of blossoms garlands wind;--
 Cucumbers, mushrooms, vegetables
 Food of every kind;
 Lord! Days of dearth let lie behind,
 Ne'er let them reach the earth--⁸⁶

Rain, as the blessing of Lord Supreme, stultifies the miscreant's wrong intention. Says "Sur Sarang":

Lightening arrived, rain pattered, poured,
 Came to remain and reign;
 The hoarder who for dearness hoped
 Now wrings his hands in vain,
 Five multiplied to fifteen; so

⁸⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 95

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p 96.

The page has turned again.
 The profiteer may disappear
 And cause no longer pain...⁸⁷

This is how Latif paints his Sindh as a land of beauty and plenitude. Latif rejoices in the beauty of nature. He simultaneously invokes divine benediction to assuage the pain and suffering of the simple folk due to scarcity of rain.

3.4 Sufism in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif

Shah Abdul Latif's position vis a vis Prophet Mohammad varies a bit from the orthodox Mohammadans. Whereas the latter would make us believe that "Prophet Mohammad is the only medium of salvation"⁸⁸, Sufis, without denying the sublimity and extraordinary spiritual merit of the Prophet, would find Prophet's monopoly as the agent of human salvation as contradictory to their pantheistic doctrine. Divine pantheism entails the immanence of God in all forms of life. By corollary, all living beings emanate from and partake of the essence of 'haq', the Supreme Reality, or 'Truth':

If they hold otherwise, they are not Sufis, or they are
 hypocrites, being afraid of the orthodox Mohammadans"⁸⁹

Those who are not intimidated by holding an overtly idiosyncratic position in opposition to staunch Mohammadans, like Mansur-al-Hallaj and Shams Tabrezi, are killed. Latif abstains from openly contesting the supposed monopoly of the Prophet as the agent of salvation. If Latif would have done that, he would have met the fate of his predecessors at the hands of Nur Mahomed Kalhoro, Latif's self-proclaimed enemy:

It may be that Latif wanted to lead the minds of his
 followers slowly and gradually into higher Sufism by
 allowing them to believe first in their Prophet, and then

⁸⁷ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 97.

⁸⁸ Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani. *The Religion and Poetry of Shah Latif: The Greatest Poet of Sind*. 1889. p 39.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*. p 39.

by degrees to ascend higher and higher.⁹⁰

Latif's mystical creed delineates a journey from shariat, to Tariqat, Haqiqat and Marfat, corresponding to the precepts of the law, the path followed by the seeker, the truth and ultimate knowledge of the divine. The following verse from Latif's "Sur Sohini" summarizes the entire journey of the human quester:

Saray sikh sabaq, shariat sando sohini
 Tariquata tikho wahay, haqiqat jo haq
 Ma'rifat marak, asul A'shiqann khey.⁹¹
 Master the lesson thoroughly
 That law doth teach Sohini--
 Then contemplate and meditate
 Till 'truth' comes near to thee--
 But "Reality's Vision" will be
 Reward of lovers true.⁹²

Apart from being deeply impressed by the yogis, Shah Latif endorsed the ascetic piety and worldly nonchalance of the 'beparwah' Qalandars. Completely against the acquisitive instinct and the concept of possessing private property, Latif felt that these were a hindrance in the path of a spiritual seeker. More human being attempts to possess them, more they possess and enchain the human being to them. Latif is known to have walked for two days to meet Qalandar Qaimuddin. The latter was seated on a broken cot and had no reverence for the rituals like offering prayers five times a day. Latif's mystical sensibility automatically gelled with the Qalandar's firm faith in advaita or 'wahdah al-wujud' (unity of being), devoid of religious formalisms.

3.5 Path to the attainment of the divine Beloved

Shah Abdul Latif refused to believe in dogmatic religion as the path to the divine Beloved, but without denouncing religious rituals. S.M.Jhangiani cites Latif's verse:

Roza ain nimazoon, ee pini cano kamu

⁹⁰ Ibid. p 39.

⁹¹ A.K.Brohi. Introduction. *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 20.

⁹² *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 191.

Oo ko biyo fahmu, jahin san pasanu pirina jo.
 These fasts and holy prayers
 Are surely good things all,
 But the wisdom were withal,
 To sight thy love is different quite.⁹³

M.U.Malkani's English translation as cited by Jhangiani explicitly reveals Latif's Sufi understanding of establishing a close connection with the divine Beloved through love. "Fasts and holy prayers" can be enabling in renouncing worldliness and enhancing concentration in the divine Being. Religion, if pursued with true devotion and sincerity, can be a means to an end, the realization of God. Latif's Sufi idiom follows the path to self-effacement in an urge to unite with the divine Beloved. For him, the way to the attainment of the beloved is self-effacement. The ego, the subjective 'I' needs to zero down to nothingness so as to become one with the Supreme Being. When asked whether Latif was a Shia or a Sunni, Latif, hardly interested in such superficial binaries, is known to have replied that he was between the two. When pejoratively countered with the reply that there was nothing between the two, Latif replied: "verily, I am nothing." "Sur Asa" explicates how the zone of nothingness takes the seeker close to the sought:

Beloved, hold the 'I' near thee;
 All self-concern I've cast from me;
 Protector mine, with duality
 I wasted far too many days!⁹⁴

A concomitant of renouncing the ego is the renunciation of all worldly ties and human relationships. In "Sur Ramkali", Latif expresses the need to learn this lesson from the 'yogis':

These God-lovers, they do unfold
 Humility within their eyes--
 They have no fathers, mothers, castes,
 No pedigrees, no ties untold;

⁹³ S.M. Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986. p 20.

⁹⁴ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 58.

God is their One relationship
 That they within their pure souls hold;
 Of all the treasures manifold
 A loin-cloth all their savings is.⁹⁵

Having renounced the phenomenal world, and its parameter of good and evil, the mystical seeker enters the zone beyond the world of senses. The introspective turn, the peep within the heart is the prelude to the vision of the divine. Latif cherishes the blowing of the hornpipe by the 'jogis', which stirs the eternal melody within. The soul-stirring music of the hornpipe is more efficacious than any manifestation of physically heard melody appealing to the human senses. Says Latif in "Sur Ramkali":

Their (yogi's) Horn-pipe is mysterious and its melody
 shall annihilate me;
 It is not like the pipe blown by camel-drivers,
 It is not like the violin which excelled the flute,
 Nor is it like the harmonious sound of the bells--...
 Its melody is more excruciating than that of the strings
 of the fiddle that slew Diyach...⁹⁶

There is a clear implication in the above verse that the yogi's horn-pipe produces not the soft, harmonious, soothing music which would bring the listener into a mellifluous harmony with the external world; instead, as the employment of the word 'excruciating' suggests, the yogis horn-pipe produces a sound which is extracting and penetrating, something that jolts the listener out of complacency. The yogi does not aim at accommodating the self into the comfort of the worldly fold. Instead, by example, the yogi teaches detachment from the here and now and connecting with the 'Reality' beyond the commonplace.

3.6 Shah Latif's syncretic sensibility

Dr Sorley, in his book, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*, asserts that Sindhi Sufism is akin to Indian mysticism, as it emerges from the Vedantic tradition, yoga or the Indian Bhakti trend:

⁹⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 72

⁹⁶ S. M. Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986. p 25.

The two great characteristics of Sufi thought, namely, a belief in the unity, through effort, of the soul with God, and the transitoriness of temporal things, which are a veil hiding the true nature of illumination from the comprehension of man, are evident in all Shah Latif's poetry.⁹⁷

Latif's syncretic sensibility allows him to adopt Buddhist as well as Vedantic mystical concepts. Often such mystical systems feed into and help in the development of Latif's own novel mystical currency. Vedantists go with the principle of 'Tat Tvam Asi', 'That Thou Art'. Here, the 'thou' is the quintessential inner self called 'atma' by the Vedantists. The Vedantists understand the state of awareness as one where 'atma' is understood as 'one' with Brahma. A.K.Brohi, in his introduction to Elsa Kazi's translation of Shah Abdul Latif's *Risalo* writes:

The Vedantists ...steer clear of this dichotomy [between his own finite self and divine infinitude] in that they claim that Atma, the finite self, is the Brahma and the spiritual progress for man does not lie in the 'Atma' disappearing in the Brahma as in the increasing awareness that Atma is Brahma.⁹⁸

For the Vedantists salvation is reached with this immediate realization "That Thou Art", that the inner self is synonymous with the unconditioned Reality, eternal and immortal. For Buddhists, the mystical experience is like the dew drop merging into the vastness of the sea. Renunciation of worldliness and abnegation of the egotistic self is a prelude to get rid of suffering / unhappiness in this life. There is no such thing as the individual soul's realizing the divine Brahma because the human and the divine are separate; the individual and the absolute exist exclusive of each other. The emphasis is on 'karma' and right action. The final possibility is that of renunciation of worldly life and merger of the human dew drop into the vastness of the sea:

Once the craving for existence is overcome, freedom is secured-- and Nirvana attained; the truth-finder passes

⁹⁷ L.H. Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 47.

⁹⁸ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 18.

in a void as a flame returns to the invisible state of fire
in which it existed prior to its manifestation in the form
of visible fire.⁹⁹

Latif's mystical system seems to synthesize the two into a philosophical system where the self attains not just god-realization but eventual merger in the divine Being through love, 'ishq-i-haqiqi'. Self-abnegation of Buddhist paradigm leads in Latif's world to union with the divine Beloved, the state approximating to Shankaracharya's "Shivoham Shivoham". These two states are understood in Islamic mystical paradigm as 'fana' (self-annihilation) and 'baqa' (life-eternal in a state of unity with divinity). In contrast, orthodox Islam allows close approximation, but never the attainment or union with the divine Being, 'Allah'. Sufi mysticism raises the taboo and opens the gateway to union with the divine Godhead. Whereas Buddhism allows the dew-drop to be swallowed by the vast sea, Sufi mysticism, in concurrence with Indian Vedantism, enables the dew-drop to realize its quintessential oneness with the vast sea. Latif makes real the verses from *Ashtavakra Gita* which read as follows:

wonderful am I! Adoration to myself who know no
decay and survive even the destruction of the world
from Brahma down to the clump of grass.¹⁰⁰

Wonderful am I! Adoration to myself who, though with
a body am one, who nether go anywhere nor come from
anywhere, but abide pervading the universe.¹⁰¹

The place of astounding potentialities accorded to human being in the Vedantic modal matches well with the centrality given by Shah Abdul Latif to a human being ardently seeking after the divine Beloved. In Latif's "sur Sohini", the intrepid heroine displays ineffable courage. Undaunted by the elemental forces of nature, she adheres to her single-minded pursuit of her beloved Sahar. In the character of Sohni:

⁹⁹ A.K.Brohi. Introduction. *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi.1965. p 19.

¹⁰⁰ *Ashtavakra Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nityaswarupananda.1953. p 22 . The Sanskrit text reads:

अहो अहं महं विनाशो यस्य नास्ति मे।
ब्रह्मादिस्तम्ब पर्यन्तं जगन्नाशोऽपि तिष्ठतः॥ 11 AA

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p 23. The Sanskrit text reads:

अहो अहं नमो मह्यमेकोऽगा ngokufi A
cdfpUu xUrk ukxUrk 0; klra fo' oeofLFkr%AA 12 AA

Hunderds were by the river drowned—
But river drowned was by this maid...¹⁰²

Latif invests the folk-tale with mystical underpinnings. The otherwise awe-inspiring elemental forces of nature, can not splinter the determination of an avid seeker after the divine Beloved. Human being, a mere speck in the grand scheme of things and the immensity of the universe, emerges as a vanquisher. However, the triumph is achieved not through ego-centric exultation at the triumph over the adversary, but through drowning the ocean in and as a gesture of courage and valour and unwavering dedication to attain union with the divine Beloved. Sohini's inimitable courage makes her greater than the otherwise invincible water current. Sohini attains permanence in the final moment of achieving union with the the forces of nature and with her beloved Sahar. The aforecited verses from *Ashtavakrageeta* find actuation in Latif's mystical framework and his protagonists seeking single-minded union with the divine Beloved.

3.7 Motifs in the Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif.

3.7.1 Life-in-death and Death-in-life

The theme of Life-in death and death-in-life is momentous for Latif's mystical worldview.

Die to be beautiful, life is
Hindrance twixt him and you,--
Helpless one, boldly do pursue
Give breath to find friend.¹⁰³

Latif says in Sur "Sasui: Madhuri--XVIII":

Who die before death, never will
Destroyed by dying be,--
Who live before second life they see
Will live eternally.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 201.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p 132.

The divine Beloved is not to be attained without making a sacrifice:

Had you died yesterday, you'd met
 Your Punhun yesterday,
 All hale-and-hearty, never yet
 Succeeded finding love.¹⁰⁵

Death of the physical self and the physical materialistic desires opens the gateway to the spiritual font of human life. Here is a living embodiment of the saying, 'no pains, no gains'. In Sur "Sasui: Hussaini"-XIX, Sasui expresses her condition as neither alive nor dead. The longing for the divine Beloved transcends all consciousness of life and death. Both come meaningless to Sasui, in an overweening urge to reach the Beloved Punhun.

No more alive nor dead...yet death
 I feel is claiming me...
 Beloved...I give up my breath
 In longing now for thee.¹⁰⁶

3.7.2 Role of Nature: the Beautiful or the Sublime

Highly distressed by the deplorable condition of the people, Shah Latif advises men to unite against the oppressive tyrant and admonishes them to follow the manner of birds that take free flights in the sky and yet remain united with their fleet:

They in convoys travel ever,
 Their connections never cut—
 Not like man their kinship sever,
 oh! behold the loving birds.¹⁰⁷

Latif feels dismayed by the perversity of human aspiration. Human being wishes to devastate, dominate and exercise power. It pains Latif to express the malaise that pesters mankind:

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p 132.

¹⁰⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 137.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p 137.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p 163.

The lovely peacocks all are dead,
 And not one swan I see.
 Instead the crafty snipes...ah! Me
 Have here their homeland made.¹⁰⁸

Often Latif invests nature with intense meanings evocative of the possibility of redemption and union with the divine Being. Clouds disrupt a clear view of the sun, symbol of divine presence. Lightning, a prelude to rain, becomes the harbinger of union with God. Clouds will pour down divine benediction on sincere seekers:

Dark clouds camouflage the sun
 Lightnings promise soulful blessings
 Abide in love, despair not,
 He will rendezvous soon.¹⁰⁹
 (Translation mine.)

Here we witness ideational and emotional investment of the poet's psychology into his verses. Brimming with emotion, the poet drapes nature in the attire of mystical connotations. Here, logic fails, rationality does not work. Here, the 'whys' and the 'hows' are not applicable; only the emotion remains and defies any requisite need for rational explanation.

In the hands of Latif, nature becomes the lover's messenger to the divine Beloved in "Sur Khambhat". Moon, situated light years ahead, is presented as having a conversation with the Beloved.

O moon! You are the one who has the vision of my
 Beloved from there. O moon! Convey my tearful
 messages to my Beloved. I am alone. May I never get

¹⁰⁸ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 178.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p 119. The Sindhi version in Devnagi script reads:

सजो साफु न उभरे, सरिले विचौ सिजु,
 eqq pf<+ks ek. Mfu [k] fm, ck/k; fot
 fga/Mk! [kiqe f[kt] fl /k feybn l fi jh
 ?Vvk ds dkj.k l w z l kjk l kiQ ugha noखता है। बिजली लोगों को मुँहमांगी
 बधाइयाँ दे रही है। हृदय! चाह रख, मत खीझ। साजन शीघ्र मिलेंगे।

separated from my Beloved.¹¹⁰ (Translation mine).

Human inclination is symbolized as the camel, the ship of the desert. An erroneous soul is compared with a rambling camel who repeatedly digresses from the path:

In the pleasant moon-lit night, the ground is plain, the way straight but the destination is far. O Camel! On the way to the Beloved, do not turn your neck. Your steadfast dedication will take me to the Beloved.¹¹¹
(Translation mine)

The camel is presented as invested with immense capabilities and yet with a tendency to wander. Such is human nature as well. Further, Latif derives poignant philosophical truths from the world of nature. What appears sweet and pleasant to the senses may have an antithetical repercussion as an aftermath:

Good animal, what you did put
Your teeth in, finding them so sweet;
These baneful creepers if you eat
Will bring you yet to grief and woe.¹¹²

The implication is that sweet-tasting plants are not really sweet and benevolent. What appears sweet in its immediate effect is really baneful in the long run. Hence, human beings should spurn from transient and short-lived joys and hanker after the eternal and ever-lasting happiness derived from basking in divine love.

¹¹⁰ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 74

ra pM! mgkb] tks gfr i l ha Fks fi jha/ [k]
आडितु चइजि उनिखे, डियाँइ जो रोई,
हेकाँदीv gkb] l kxq e ios l t. ka
हे चाँद! तुम वही हो जो वहाँ मेरे प्रियतम को देखते हो। चाँद! मैं रोककर
तुम्हें जो सन्देश देती हूँ, वह उसे कह देना। मैं अकेली हूँ। मेरा वल्लम से
fo; kx u gka

¹¹¹ Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 75.

राति सहाई, भूँसई, पटिन पड़ो पंधु,
gyns gchcfu Mj djgk! ekfM+e d/q
ca/.kq l kbZ ca/q tks i gpk, fi jh&v [ka¹¹¹
चाँदनी रात है, ज़मीन भी सीधी समतल है, परन्तु मैदानों पर बहुत दूर जाना
है। ऊँट! प्रिय के पास चलते हुए अपनी गर्दन मोड़ो! ऐसा बन्धन बाँधो
(कमर कसो) जिससे मैं प्रिय के पास पहुँच सकूँ।¹¹¹

¹¹² *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 50.

The two aspects of nature appear in Latif's verses as the beautiful and the sublime, to use wordsworth's terminology. In its harmonious and melodious aspect, Latif's nature exhibits perfect beatitude and becomes the register of divine presence in the visible empirical world. On the other extreme, nature posits formidable challenges to a seeker after the divine Beloved. Sasui in "Sur Sasui: Kohiyari" is not daunted by the rough mountainous path, "the high-handed tyrant."¹¹³ Instead she reprimands the mountain for its insolence and obstinacy:

O mountain, hearts of sorrowing ones
You should console and soothe;
Instead of that, their feet you bruise—
You stony, callous one.¹¹⁴

In its sublime aspect, nature is intimidating and presents itself as overwhelming, awe-inspiring as well as devastating. Yet, in the hands of the seminal saint-poet Shah Latif, nature and its overpowering and engulfing grandeur is vanquished by a genuine seeker after the divine Beloved. One who has relinquished worldly covetousness and covets for union with the divine Beloved is not to be subjugated by the most threatening facets of the empirical world. Sasui as much as Sohini confront the elemental forces of nature, resist the dread inflicted by nature, and eventually make them selves greater than this sublime aspect of nature, which would otherwise cause distress and apprehension for men of the world.

3.7.3 Reversal of meanings: Sweet and Bitter, Pleasure and Pain, Poison and Ambrosial potion

Words and discursive categories like sweet and bitter, pleasure and pain, poison and ambrosial potion undergo a semantic reversal in the hands of Sufi poets like Shah Latif. Bitter becomes sweet, sweet bitter. In "Sur Khambat—III", the poet admonishes the camel not to get distracted by sweet tasting creepers. By analogy, sweet tasting material possessions will bring suffering to man kind. They are obstacles in the attainment of the ambrosial sweetness embodied in the divine Beloved:

¹¹³ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965p 125.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p 126.

Good animal, what did you put
 Your teeth in, finding them so sweet;
 These baneful creepers if you eat
 Will bring you yet to grief and awe.¹¹⁵
 (“Sur Khambat- III”)

Temporal pleasure culminates in pain, pain entails joy eternal. Says “Sur Kalyan-I”:

If you have learnt to long, by pain
 Be not distressed—
 Secret of love’s sorrow must be
 Never confessed—
 Suffering is by the heart caressed,
 And there it is preserved.¹¹⁶

Suffering caused by intense longing for the divine Beloved is a cherished asset. Momentary pleasure experienced by the gratification of the lower desires (nafs) turns out to be transitory and culminates in sorrow. Passion for the divine Beloved and burning in intense desire for union with Him becomes the gateway to eternal joy in communion with the divine Being. Drinking deep the poison of hardships and worldly renunciation, results in divine joy:

Sacrifice your head and become a true Sufi. Drink the
 cup of poison. This is the way with those who end up
 tasting honey divine. (Translation mine.)¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 50.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* p32

¹¹⁷ Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1969. p 64. Original version in Devnagri script reads:

ts dYy% j [kha dā/ r] r l i i th l fyeq Fkhm]
 fog oVh gfFk dj] i j l; kyks i hm]
 ga/q fruha tks ghm] ftfu gkfl y d; ks gky [kA
 viuk 'kh'k mrkj nls vks l Pps l i i th cuka gkFk ea tej dh dVijh yd j
 ijh ih tkvka ;g mu ykxka dk LFku gS ftUga (: gkuh eLrh) fn0; e/q
 iklr gvk gA

3.8 Shah Latif's position vis-à-vis prominent Sufi poets of Sindh.

Shah Abdul Latif's mysticism can be better understood in the matrix of the prominent Sufi poets of Sindh like Sachal Sarmast, Dalpat, Bedil, and Bekas. Sachal was born in the Kalhor/Talpur era of Sindh. He was born in Daraza, near Ranipur, Sindh. His real name was Abdul Wahab Farouqi and "Sachal" or "Sachoo" are his nicknames. He used this pen-name in his poetry. 'Sachu' means 'truthful'. 'Sarmast' means 'ecstatic' in Sindhi and Urdu alike. 'Sachal Sarmast' literally means 'truthful mystic' or can be translated as "Ecstatic Saint of Truth". Sachal Sarmast was an ardent follower of 'Wahdat-ul-wujood' (unity of existence). Muhammad Mohsin (1859–1882) was a Sindhi poet, famous under his nom-de-plume Bekas.

L.H.Ajwani aptly writes:

The Sindhi literature before Shah Abdul Latif is a product of three forces. There was, firstly, the folklore of Sindh, the heritage that had come down from the time of the Sammas and the Sumras, and the Hindu rulers gone before them, secondly it was the influence of Persian mystic poets, and thirdly, the Indian Bhakt kavis whose verses exuded the fragrance of Vedantism, yoga and Bhakti.¹¹⁸

Ajwani's reference to the Persian mystic poets is to the utterances of Jalaluddin Rumi, Hafiz, Hakim Jami, Farid-ud-din Attar, Al Ghazali and Saadi and their immense appeal to the people. This was due to the presence of Persian speaking people from Persia, Central Asia, Baluchistan and Afghanistan in Sindh and also due to the fact that Persian was the court language under the Arghuns, Turkhans and the Mughals. The Bhakti kavis began to have an indispensable influence on Sindh:

Bukker in Upper Sindh, and Tatta in lower Sindh, were places frequently visited by Indians as well as by travellers to India, and there was a salutary exchange of ideas.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. pp 55-56.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p 55.

Ajwani mentions Sindh's geographical location as 'contiguous'¹²⁰ to Punjab and Rajasthan and hence direct Punjabi and Rajasthani influences on Sindh. Hence, we can conceptualize the prominence of the image of Ranjha jogi as the divine beloved of the Sindhi Sufi poet and the mingling of this image with Krishna, the flute-player and the cow-herd, the divine Beloved of Meera coming from the Bhakti devotional poetry and belonging geographically to Rajasthan. Bulleh Shah also expresses his amazement at the mesmerizing flute of Kanha and collates the same with the Natha yogic tradition of Gorakhnath from Uttar Pradesh. Hence, this was a curious epoch of amalgamation vis a vis symbolism, iconography, mysticism and understanding of the meaning of human existence and human identity in relation to the supreme reality. Such an overview is significant for the establishment of connections and building up of a panoramic view of a complete understanding of the Sufi paradigm. The Sufi poets of Sindh under consideration are Hazrat Mian Mir, Shah Abdul Karim, Qazi Qazan, Shah Inat, Shah Abdul Latif, Sachal Sarmast, Dalpat, Bedil, and Bekas.

3.8.1 Shah Abdul Latif and Shah Inat (1613-1719 A.D.)

A contemporary of Shah Latif, Shah Inat was familiar with the spiritual poetry of Shah Karim. Belonging to a Rizvi Sayyed family of Nasarpur, Hyderabad, Sindh, Shah Inat's approximate date of birth as cited by Dr. Motilal Jotwani is between 1613 C.E. and year of death as approximately between 1701-1719 A.D. Belonging to the Qadiriyyah order of Sufis, Shah Inat felt gravitated towards Sama. Shah Inat's verses gave a mystical tilt to the life-stories of Sindhi folk heroines like Marui, Sasui, Sorath and Lila. Writes Jotwani:

But for his great poetry, the glorious heights reached by
Shah Abdul Latif's poetry in the eighteenth century
would have seemed very sudden.¹²¹

Shah Abdul Latif is known to have met Shah Inat as an amateur Sufi mystic with the hope of widening his horizon:

Novices in the field of Sindhi poetry from far and wide

¹²⁰ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 55.

¹²¹ Motilal Jotwani. Introduction. *Four Classical Poets of Sindh*. Allana, G. 1996. p 1.

would come to see him for their benefit. Shah Abdul
Latif was one of them.¹²²

Shah Inat speaks highly of the yogis and their communicable mystical impulses:

Behold the flushes of fire,
Aroused by the yogis and their ire.
They, in the darkness of the night, betook themselves to
flight.
How can I of their love speak publicly,
which to me they entrusted secretly?
Throughout the night I weep,
and in my heart their remembrance keep.¹²³

Similar sentiment is expressed by Shah Abdul Latif, where he deplores the fact that the 'jogis' have left him in his sleep and moved forth in their mystical quest and wishes to unite with them in their ascetic and contented lifestyle.

In Shah Inat's verses, there appears another clear expression of the sense of identity between human and the divine Being, the concept of 'hama ost', 'all is He':

The Beloved with me is unified,
With my very breath is identified.
Why Him shall I call,
Who is not far from me at all?¹²⁴

Shah Inat was also deeply oriented in the folk-lore of Sindh. The tenacity to the scintillating world of materialism and its fallacious acquisitive instinct makes Dido repent her folly. She exchanged her love, Chanesar, for worldly treasures:

So many mistakes have I committed,
Which can only by you be remitted.
The necklace I did give away,
And this to Chanesar I did not say,

¹²² Motilal Jotwani. Introduction. *Four Classical Poets of Sindh*. Allana, G. 1996. p 1.

¹²³ G. Allana. *Four Classical Poets of Sindh*. 1996. p 12.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p 18.

O, take me into your mercy's embrace,
 Let me not taunts and insults face.¹²⁵

Realizing the stupidity of adherence to worldly treasures, Shah Inat mentions two modes of existence: death-in-life and life-in-death. In order to be truly alive, one has to learn to die during one's life. This will become the source of regeneration, resuscitation, and lead to a feeling of a new life in the final moment of death:

You wish to live, and the Beloved to meet?
 This as merely wishful thinking treat.
 If before death you would know to die,
 Then, in Infinite's mystery you will fly.
 Living, the Beloved will you meet;
 Die, and you the Beloved will greet.¹²⁶

Earthly life and worldly fondness are antithetical to union with the divine Being ('fana') and life-eternal in communion with Him ('Baqā'). Living in the worldly sense is the death of one's mystical instincts, whereas death of the physical frame and worldly desires opens the path to 'rendezvous' with the divine Being. Single-minded devotion and inclination towards the divine Beloved makes the divine Being configure himself favourably towards the earthly seeker:

Welcome, welcome, you buzzing bees,
 Who buz and perfume squeeze.
 The lotus gives them her face,
 And in her heart finds them a place.¹²⁷

Here, the reciprocity between the earthly lover and the divine Beloved is expressed through imagery picked up from the world of nature. The buzzing bees and the lotus, both seem mutually inclined towards each other. Inat emphatically reiterates:

Do not sit and tarry, dissatisfied,
 Proceed, so that you may be unified.
 Doubts within your heart banish;

¹²⁵ G. Allana. *Four Classical Poets of Sindh*. 1996. p 20.

¹²⁶ Ibid. p 20

¹²⁷ G. Allana. *Four Classical Poets of Sindh*. 1996. p 22.

Let scepticism within you vanish.
 If the Beloved's tracks you fail to recall,
 It is a pleasure for the beloved to crawl.¹²⁸

This is the intense faith posited by the human seeker in the divine Beloved. If at all the seeker fails to trace the exact path towards union with the Beloved, the latter will not fail the human lover and with pleasure seek the latter. This reciprocity and co-mutuality is central to the Sufi paradigm and co-terminus with the Indian Vedantic thought. Shah Latif articulates a parallel belief in the reciprocity of love between the human lover and the divine Beloved. There is the idea of mutual longing between God, the divine source and the human soul, the yearner:

The thirsty seek water,
 Water also seeks the thirsty. (Translation mine.)¹²⁹

Sasui reduces herself to a naught for the sake of Sasui. Those who thirst for water, water also feels thirsty for them. Divine Beloved also hankers for the genuine lovers. The hankering is mutual. The ardent human seeker is hence endowed with a special sense of dignity and importance with respect to divine source of life. The concept is endorsed by the Indian Vedantic thought.

3.8.2 Shah Abdul Latif and Shah Inayat of Jhok (1656-1718)

With strong socialist sensitivity, Shah Inat of Jhok (1656-1718), was a Sufi and an activist, whose humanitarian instinct raised the voice against exploitation of the poor farmer at the hands of the zamindars:

He refused to pay taxes to the government on the
 ground that the land occupied by him and his followers

¹²⁸ G. Allana. *Four Classical Poets of Sindh*. 1996. p 24.

¹²⁹ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. pp 125-126. The Sindhi version reads:

साजन कारणि सुज, मरू कबूले ससुई,
 अंदरि जिनीं उज, पाणी उज्यो उनिखे।
 I l pZ l ktu ds fy, Hkys 'W; dks LohdkjA ftuds vnj l;kl jgrh gS
 muds fy, i kuh Hkh fi i kfl r gh jgrk gA l Pps vkf' kdk ds fy, egar
 Hkh ykykf; r jgrk gA

had been given free of tax by his ancestors.¹³⁰

He also unequivocally raised the banner against religious orthodoxy and their exploitative circumvention of religiosity in complex rituals. The Sayyids of Bulri and the zamindars felt a potent threat to their power position as well as revenues collected from the poor peasants. Shah Inayat's increasing popularity among the peasantry provoked Farrukh Siyar, the fifth ruler of Delhi (1712-1719) after Aurangzeb, to direct Azam Khan, the then governor of Thatta, to raise troops against Shah Inayat. Fearless and undaunted by worldly threats, Shah Inayat of Jhok embraced execution at the hands of petty rulers like Azam Khan in 1718. Shah Abdul Latif mourns the death of this great hero in "Sur Ramkali". Shah Abdul Latif who was deeply influenced by Shah Inayat of Jhok's social ideas inscribes social democracy of Shah Inayat in his Risalo by employing the folk-lore of Nuri-Jam Tamachi and bringing the fisherwoman Nuri and the aristocratic women of Jam Tamachi's court to the same platform; the folk-lore of Sasui-Punhoon where Punhoon, the son of Ari Jam, ruler of Makran, relinquishes his aristocratic origin to accept the mores and manners and profession of the washer-men class of Sasui's father; and the folk-lore of Rai-Diyach, which gives place to the musician Bijal to ask for the head of king Rai Diyach as a reward for Bijal's mesmerizing music played on his harp.

3.8.3 Shah Abdul Latif and Shah Abdul Karim (1536-1620 A.D.)

Shah Abdul Karim of Bulri is the great Grand father of Shah Abdul Latif. L.H.Ajwani, like many other critics, informs us that he was eulogised as "the Chaucer of Sind" or the "morning star" of Sindhi literature.¹³¹

Shah Abdul Karim's lineage goes back to Syed Mir Ali of Herat. Karim's ancestors migrated and settled in Matiari, Sind and are known to have lived a life of extreme asceticism and renunciation. Carrying on the motto of Prophet Mohammad, 'Poverty is my pride',¹³² Karim's ancestors like Syed Mir Ali lived a life of "stoicism, humility and self-control".¹³³ Shah Abdul Karim migrated from Matiari to Bulri and came to be

¹³⁰ G. Allana. *Four Classical Poets of Sindh*. 1996. p 42.

¹³¹ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 63.

¹³² L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 63.

¹³³ Ibid. p 63.

called "Bulri-a-Waro", the sage of Bulri,¹³⁴ Shah Abdul Karim assimilated the legacy of Syed Mir Ali's company of fakirs and dervishes and is known to acknowledge them as his real instructors, as against the holy scriptures. Karim believed in maintaining a fine balance between worldly and spiritual pursuits. Worldly contemplation should not be a deterrent in spiritual pursuit. His injunction has been aptly recorded by Ajwani:

Let the hand be busy in labour and
the heart busy in yearning for God.¹³⁵

Brought up by his mother and brother, Shah Abdul Karim was sent to the local 'maktab', where he took little interest in bookish learning. It is known about him that he took meager interest in following the trodden path. When the teacher instructed the school- children to collect fire-wood and memorize lessons simultaneously, Karim chose to remember God. Karim took great interest in Samas and felt entranced by Sufi songs accompanied by stringed instruments and dancing. While his elder brother Syed Jalal disapproved of wasting time in such congregations and, instead, subsisted on focusing on school education, Shah Abdul Karim went poetic:

Say Allah is One, learn no other speech,
Keep on writing in your mind this true word alone.¹³⁶

Shah Abdul Karim's second son, Syed Jamal Shah, was the grand father of Shah Abdul Latif. Shah Abdul Karim is accredited with introducing the vehicle of Sindhi folk tales like Sasui-Punhu, Umar- Marui and Leela Chanesar in his verses. L.H.Ajwani discusses Karim's diction as belonging to the dialect of lower Sindh, called Lar, in its pronunciation as well as spelling. Shah Karim's imagery is appreciated by Ajwani as "thoroughly Sindhi"¹³⁷ and the verse form is the Indian doha which enables the poet to be concise and succinct and gives an epigrammatic quality to his verses. The central ideas of Karim's verses are hence:

- (i) Desire for the divine beloved is incongruous with and antithetical to the worldly wisdom and materialist aspirations:

¹³⁴ Motilal Jotwani. *Shah Abdul Latif: His Life and Work*. 1975. p 18.

¹³⁵ L.H. Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 64.

¹³⁶ G. Allana. *Four Classical Poets of Sindh*. 1996. p 18.

¹³⁷ L.H. Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 64.

The twain are incompatible; yearning for the Beloved,
and care for the world.¹³⁸

- (ii) Pedanticism, literary and scriptural, is puny in front of the Supreme Godhead:

Others may study Grammar, my only
Knowledge consists in One God-- He and He alone.¹³⁹

- (iii) The sensory perceptions are inefficacious in realizing God:

The tongue or the eye
Cannot realize the dear One.¹⁴⁰

- (iv) The journey to God and union with the divine beloved is realized , not through a physical journey but, on an emotive and psychological plane, through an odyssey of the heart and soul:

I may be physically in this spot, O Umar,
But in my heart I am with the Marus in Thar.¹⁴¹

- (v) There is a unity between the knower, knowledge and the known:

He is the king, the message and the messenger,
The knower and knowledge.¹⁴²

Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani in *The Life, Religion and Poetry of Shah Latif* produces direct parallels and influence of Karim's verses on Shah Abdul Latif. Some of these ideas assimilated in Latif's verses are:

- (i) "Each breath, as it were, is a messenger between the created and the creator, and should carry nothing but the name of God".¹⁴³
- (ii) One should take care of four dear things, (1) eat less, (2) sleep less, (3) love the

¹³⁸ L.H. Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 64.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 1970. p 64.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p 64.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p 64.

¹⁴² Ibid. p 64.

¹⁴³ Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani. *The Religion and Poetry of Shah Latif: The Greatest Poet of Sind*. 1889. p 45.

world less, (4) remember God.¹⁴⁴

- (iii) Shah Abdul Karim explained the well-known Sufic words: 'Ilmul yakin', he said consists in one's hearing of and believing in the existence of the great sea, by which he meant the pervading spirit of the great Being; 'ainul-yakin' consists in one's actually seeing the said sea; and 'hakul-yakin' is one's actually becoming one with that sea.¹⁴⁵ In the final state of 'hakul-yakin', the lover and the divine Beloved become one.

3.8.4 Shah Latif and Hazrat Mian Mir (1550-1635 A.D.)

After an in-depth research, Gyani Singh 'Brahma' has revealed that the birthplace of Hazrat Mian Mir is not Sistan in Iran and that he was not a descendent of Caliph Umr; instead, Gyani Brahma expatiates that Hazrat Mian Mir was born in Sivastan, Sindh. For this purpose, Gyani Brahma cites from two significant sources: the memoirs of Jehangir, called *Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri* and Hazrat Mian Mir's contemporary Dara Shikoh's *Sakinat-ul-Aulia*. The former of these sources express Emperor Jehangir's intense desire to meet Mian Mir due to Mian Mir's reportedly noble spirit:

As it was reported to me that in Lahore one Mian Sheikh Muhammad Mir by name who was a dervish, a Sindhi by origin, very eloquent. Virtuous, austere, of auspicious temperament, a lord of ecstasy had seated himself in the corner of reliance upon God and retirement was rich in his poverty and independent of the world, my truth seeking mind was not at rest without meeting him and my desire to see him increased.¹⁴⁶

Dara Shikoh's biography reiterates Mian Mir's birthplace as Sivastan, situated between Thatta and Bhakkar. Mian Mir's friendship with Guru Arjan Dev has been underlined and Mian Mir's laying the foundation of Darbar Sahib of Amritsar has

¹⁴⁴ Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani. *The Religion and Poetry of Shah Latif: The Greatest Poet of Sind*. 1889. p 46.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p 46

¹⁴⁶ Gyani Brahma Singh Brahma. *Hazrat Mian Mir and the Sufi Tradition*. 1994. p 2.

been unanimously consented upon. As the patronage of the extant Muslim king of India was a prevalent practice, Mian Mir also enjoyed the patronage of Jehangir and Shahjehan. But, in this relationship, it was not a fortification of the politico-religious power nexus of the two; instead it was the flow of spiritual experience and philosophic guidance to the Emperor in a mutually respectful relationship.

Mian Mir's genuine mystic pursuit is evinced by his spiritual graph. It is documented that in search of a true mystic guide and murshid, Mian Mir came across a huge tandoor and to his utter surprise he finds

Some sort of sitting arrangement made inside the oven...
Mian Mir waited for the return of the mysterious owner
of the oven for three days and three nights.... this
strange man was Sheikh Khizr, Mian Mir's would-be
spiritual master who transformed Mir Mohammed into
an angel.¹⁴⁷

Sheikh Khizr was a Qaderiya Sufi renunciate who became the torch-bearer for Mian Mir's mystical journey. Mian Mir lead a simple and frugal life, remained celibate and observed "Gharibi and Inksaari - poverty and humility" and a life of submission to "Allah's hukam"¹⁴⁸ (divine ordinance), considering all human strivings as imperfect and submitting himself to the will and grace of God.

Mian Mir belongs to those early Sufis who had nothing against 'shariat'. For them, it was natural to understand 'shariat' as a stepping stone to 'haqiqat'. Explains Gyani Singh Brahma:

He would often postulate that man is a composite of three things: Nafs-Ego; Dil-heart; Rooh- Soul; and to harness them in spiritual equilibrium; to be conducive to life in meditation and submission to sharia't code; to walk on the path of Tariqat in the search of Maarifat and to embrace Haqiqat- Truth are a Sufi dervish's prime objects of

¹⁴⁷ Gyani Brahma Singh Brahma. *Hazrat Mian Mir and the Sufi Tradition*. 1994. p 6.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p 8.

sojourn in this ever-changing and vanishing world.¹⁴⁹

In *Sakinat-ul-Aulia*, Dara Shikoh (1615-1659) mentions that Hazrat Mian Mir's desire that his remains be buried in a desert place and to let them rest there without an erection of mosoleum or tomb. This was Mian Mir's gesture of humility and self-effacement:

Soort-e-qabram ze baad-e-marg veerana khushtar ast
 Nesti maanand-e-amanba khaak khushtar ast
 My grave, after my death, better, be in a deserted state
 My mortal coil, better be with earth, mingle and
 mate.¹⁵⁰

In spite of Mian Mir's desire for being buried into oblivion, Dara Shikoh got a mousoleum constructed for Mian Mir. The same has become a monument epitomizing the sublime mystical status of Mian Mir and the high esteem in which Dara Shikoh held this great personage.

Gyani Brahma Singh recounts Emperor Shah Jahan's visits to Mian Mir. Purpose of such a visit was divine counsel and a chance to get initiated into the spiritually charged 'urs' of the Saint's abode. Mian Mir is said to have refused the 'dastaar' or turban as well as had no use for the 'tasbih' or rosary presented to him by the emperor. Mia Mir's sentiment is expressed in the following words:

Tasbih-ba-man dar aamad beh zabaan
 Gufta keh maa-ra-chira kuni sargardaan
 Gar dil be-hamaan bargardani tou
 Daani keh ba raaeye cheest khalagal insaan.
 The rosary wondered and spoke to me in a strange
 tongue.
 It said, "why dost thou thus make my head reel?
 Wert thou to resolve thy own heart instead?
 Thou wouldst know the purpose of man's creation.
 If at all stages thy path shall diverted be,

¹⁴⁹ Gyani Brahma Singh Brahma. *Hazrat Mian Mir and the Sufi Tradition*. 1994. p 10.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p 13.

The true goal thou shalt never see.
 And till the veil be lifted from thine eyes,
 The Sun of Truth shall never rise for thee.¹⁵¹

Hazrat Mian Mir meticulously personifies the rosary, and instead of himself moralizing about the unnecessary and mechanical exercise of rolling the beads of the rosary between the fingers, makes the rosary speak for itself. The rosary admonishes the efficacy of exercising the heart in uplifting the veil of the divine Beloved.

Hence, Latif belongs to this tradition of Sufism in Sindh, where Sufis have been 'baaghis' and proclaimed ones. These detractors from the trodden path were never afraid of articulating humanitarian principles and never afraid of death. Uncompromising in their mysticism as well as desire for social amelioration, they lived and died un-baffled by external circumstances. This is the brand of sterling Sufism being dwelt upon. No self-serving politics here, no compromise of principles bordering on personal convenience!

3.8.5 Shah Latif and Qazi Qazan (d. 1551)

Qazi Qazan is another great Sufi who deserves mention in the panorama of Sufi poets of Sindh. He is known to have lived the reigns of two Samma rulers Jam Nizamuddin and Jam Nando and the two Arghun rulers, Shah Arghun Beg and Shah Hussain. He stayed in the reputed position of "the chief Judicial functionary of Bukkur"¹⁵², Upper Sindh, for twenty years. Qazi Qazan's murshid, Syed Mir Mahadi of Jaunpur is referred to by him as

The jogi [who] woke me up from slumber,
 And made me betake the path that leads to the beloved.¹⁵³

Complete faith in and surrender to the divine Beloved is expressed as an essential pre-requisite to establishing a rapport with Him:

¹⁵¹ Gyani Brahma Singh Brahma. *Hazrat Mian Mir and the Sufi Tradition*. 1994. p 19.

¹⁵² L.H.Ajwani *History of Sindhi Literature* 1970. p 58.

¹⁵³ Ibid. p 56.

Why need I have anything to do with la or negation?

For me there is nothing visible but the beloved.¹⁵⁴

When there is nothing except the lord, there is nothing whose existence the seeker needs to negate.

Qazi Qazan also makes implicit and explicit references to Sindhi folk tales and legends which are enabling in creating an understanding of the divine Beloved and attaining a state of union with Him:

With me lay the Beloved. And when the Camel Driver
took him away

I wrung hands, for my heart was with him.¹⁵⁵

There is a clear reference to the poet's understanding that the seat of the divine Beloved is the heart of the human lover. The two are not distinct from each other. There is an exigent need to realize this close proximity before the camel-driver takes the divine Beloved away from the human lover, while the latter remains oblivious of this unity in a state of ignorance and slumber. Sleep, literally and figuratively, is understood by the Sufis as deleterious to the lover of the divine Beloved. One should shun sleep as a futile wastage of the lived time span. One should instead indulge in active pursuit of God. This active pursuit of God, in the Sufi paradigm, is synonymous with the desire for self-knowledge and answer to the question: Who am I? The question which has haunted mankind since times immemorial is the question of human identity. In this context, the Sufis share the Indian legacy of "Tat Tvam Asi", "That thou Art". The implication is that human being shares his essence with the creator. By corollary, the search for the divine Being is analogous to the search for the human self. L.H.Ajwani documents this characteristic as central to the early Sufi poet and perennial with their successors:

The sixth and the last, but not the least, characteristic of
early Sindhi poetry is that which is part of the Indian

¹⁵⁴ L.H.Ajwani *History of Sindhi Literature* 1970. p 56.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p 56.

heritage, namely, that the only knowledge worth knowing, the only 'gnan' that has any value, is that which leads to union with the Beloved, i.e., God-realization or self-realization.¹⁵⁶

3.8.6 Shah Latif and Sachal Sarmast (1739-1827 A.D.)

Born in 1739 in the village called 'Daraz' in Khairpur, northern Sindh, his actual name was Abdul Wahab. 'Sachal' and 'Sachu' were his pet names referring to his allegiance towards 'truth'. The appellation 'Sarmast' refers to his carefree forgetfulness of worldly discourses and remaining lost in the 'wahadat' of the Supreme godhead. Like many other Sufi poets, in spite of his unequivocal Muslim descent (in case of Sachal, from the second Khalifa of Muhammad, Umr Farooq), Sachal overtly critiques the delinquencies inherent in the working of institutional religion:

What stupid issues you create, O Qazi
 You don't ever dwell upon the soul's pangs of
 separation from Him.
 You only scribble and smear white paper with ink.
 Your thinking is reductive and superficial.
 Love's destination is far away beyond the periphery of
 the mosque.¹⁵⁷ (Self-translated)

¹⁵⁶ L.H.Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature* 1970. p 57.

¹⁵⁷ Srimati Janak Gorwani . *Sindh ki Triveni*. 2011. p 135. Devnagri script of the original reads:

काजियाँ, केहू el bys djhlun, a
 clk fcjg nk dklb u i < n, j
 dkxt+fy [kn, a cxs cxs
 मुल्लाँ दी दौड़ मसीतें ताई,
 b'd nh efty vxs vxs -----

Translates as

cl s el ys dktk [kms-rw djrk gS
 clk rls fcjgka clk ugha i <rk gS rM
 l i an&l i an dkxt} cl] dkys djrk gS rM
 दौड़ तो मुल्ला की वहीँ तक जहाँ है मस्जिद।
 efltn l s i js dgha vxs gS b'd dh eftyA

Here, Sachal rebukes the Mullah who prevaricates the real path towards the attainment of God and beleaguers credulous minds with meaningless 'masaeley', round-about arguments and obfuscating discourses. "Baab birah da koi naa padhdayen" refers to the absence of the authentic path towards attainment of the divine beloved. There is no reference to the pangs of separation from God. Mullah's discourses are reductive and limited to his march to the 'masjid', the material, physical abode of God; whereas God's real destination is unfettered by material/worldly boundaries: "ishq di manzil agae agae".

Further, Sachal's world is an anthropocentric world, where man is central to God's creation:

The Satguru explained to me, O Sachal! You are the King.

Don't berate yourself, you exude kingly majesty. ¹⁵⁸
(Self-translated)

There is also a clear cut emphasis on unity of Being and non-dualism. The deity and the devotee become one in the act of introspection:

Forsaking the ego, the seeker seeks in all.

Circumambulates the pure inner self

Unwraps the veil of dualism, loses oneself in divine radiance. ¹⁵⁹ (Self-translated)

¹⁵⁸ Srimati Janak Gorwani. *Sindh ki Triveni*. 2011. p 116. The original text in devnagri script reads:

l rxqj l pq l q kk; kj l pk n l q rkuq
rfgatks 'kkg h 'kkuq cklgi ckyh ulfg dk
l rxq useps l e>k; kj dgk l py! nwgS l gyrkuA
teku xy/keka dh u cky n l rgh gks 'kkgka l h 'kkuAA

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p 149. The original text in devnagri script reads:

NM& i pj i f gath] Fkk dfgfu dki dki
djs dkcls dYc [kj rkyfyc dfu roki
लाहे गैर गिलाफ़, नूरी वजी नर थिआ

Hindi translation reads:

NkMej viuh eS dks rkyfyc nfu; k Hkj ea ryk'k d jrkA
तालिब, मन को बना काबा परिक्रमा है उसकी करता।
npl dk fxyki mrlj] ujs [kpk ea l ek x, A

The devoted heart becomes 'qaba', the seat of God. "Dui ka gilaaf utaar" purports relinquishing the falsity of dualism, the deity and the devotee unite into one. The devotee circumambulates his own holiness, situated in a sterling heart, as a gesture of offering prayers to the Supreme Being. The sterling heart of a genuine devotee becomes the epicentre of the human devotee's devoutness towards God:

He is his own high priest, who worships his own self.¹⁶⁰ (Self-translated)

The introspective turn finds an acme in the saint poet's self-apotheosis, an inward turn, to discover the true springs of his existence. The essence of one's existence is to be found in relinquishing the ego:

Wondrous the path to the Beloved's abode
One lost in 'I' and 'mine' can not proceed.
God will accept him who relinquishes the 'I'.¹⁶¹ (Self-translated)

and losing oneself in the intoxicating wine of love:

Forsake books, drink of the wine of love, O Mullah!
Even a single sip will make you love-intoxicated.
Says Sachal, drink and lose yourself in love.¹⁶² (Self-translated)

¹⁶⁰ Srimati Janak Gorwani. *Sindh ki Triveni*. 2011. p 149. The original text in devnagri script reads:

i k . k i q t k j h i k f g a t k j i k f g a t k s i w t k j h i k . k q
[k p gh i q t k j h g s o g v i u k] [k p gh [k p d l s g s o g i w t r k A

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p 139. The original text in devnagri script reads:

पंथु अजाइबु पिरिअ जो, "मां" सां कीन हय]
साई चाह चले, जहिं "मां" छडी बिच में।

Hindi translation reads:

राह अजब दिलबर के घर की, करे जो "मैं-मैं" चल ना सकेगा।
शोक उसे ले जाएगा जो मन से "मैं" को बाहर करेगा।।

¹⁶² Ibid. p 133. The original text in devnagri script reads:

e f y k] N k M + f d r k c k j i h o a e b n h f g d l ; k y h]
i y d r g a f o p d k t h] F k h o s e L r k u e L r e 0 o k y h A
l p y l c d + f o g k j d j k g q k] g k o a e g C c r o k y h A A

Hindi translation reads:

N k M + f d r k c k j t k e b l e ; d k f i ; k s e f y k A
t k e b l d k x j , d H k h] , s d k t h! f i ; k s r k s n e e n g l s k g k s t k v k A
l p y] f i ; k s r k s l c d + u i Q j r d k H k y l ; k j d s i g k x k j g k s t k v k A A

Here, the meaning of Sachal comes to the fore. In such a state, says Sachal, he has reached beyond the balance sheet of profit and loss:

not abiding in profit and loss, says Sachal, I have become free.¹⁶³ (Self- translated)

Transcending the entanglement of worldly discourses and descriptive binaries, all knowledge is reduced to the simplicity of 'harf':

Only the Harf Is pure, rest is all alchemy

Lovers have reached this conclusion, though it sounds absurd.¹⁶⁴ (Self-translated)

'Harf' is a reference to the first Arabic alphabet, 'alif', which has time and again been identified with 'God' by the Sufi poets. What follows 'alif' is endless discursive entanglements, tautology, interpretation and re-interpretation, leading to an ultimate lack of meaning.

After relinquishing the ego, the next important step is Sarmast's emphasis on stabilizing the thought by situating it in the 'wahadat' of God. The final step is realizing the divine source as seated in the pure heart. Hence, there is repudiation of dualism and affirmation of unity between the devotee and the Divine. The same end is achieved by Shah Abdul Latif in allegorical terms in a union between Sasui- Punhu and Sohini-Sahar. Whereas Latif attempts to approximate his allegories close to the minds of laymen for their easy understanding and assimilation of the spiritual import of his verses, Sarmast is direct and unequivocal in his verses. Unfettered and unintimidated by worldly scourage, Sarmast considers his stay on earth as a brief sojourn and, Mansoor-like is undeterred by the censure and disgrace evoked by his idiosyncratic enunciations. Kalyan B. Advani appreciates Sachal's 'baikaid' sensibility,

¹⁶³ Srimati Janak Gorwani. *Sindh ki Triveni*. 2011. p 134. The original text in devnagri script reads:

सूद जियान कनू मियाँ, सचल हुण ता छुट पयोसे॥

फायदे नुकसान का फिक्र नहीं, सचल, छुटकारा हो गया॥

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p 134. The original text in devnagri script reads:

gi ॥ gykyq gfdM ॥ fc; k l Hkq gi ॥ gjke ॥

vlf' kdfu v tke ॥ bgls gkb v thc l kaa

Hindi translation reads:

ikd rls gS gi ॥ , d gh] ckdh gS l c gi ॥ uki kdA

आशिक पहुँचे इस अंजाम पर, अजीब बहुत लगती gS ckrA

to use the word from Bulleh Shah's famous 'kafi', 'mai bai-kaid, mai- baikaid':

He is pure spirit, unfettered by bonds of birth of family
or caste.¹⁶⁵

Kalyan B. Advani cites the following verse from Sachal:

Neither am I made of dust nor of air, neither fire nor
water

Neither am I born nor have I any descent, neither have I
mother nor father;

Why ask about Sachal's origin, my name is
'Unknowable'.¹⁶⁶

Advani cites the following lines from Rumi as illustrative of a parallel between the two poets:

I am not water or fire, I am not the froward wind;

I am not of moulded clay: I have mocked at them all.

O Son, I am not Shams-i-Tabriz, I am the pure light.

If thou seest me, beware! Tell not anyone what thou hast
seen.¹⁶⁷

The similarity is extremely perspicuous and finds a parallel in the Indian Vedantism. Here is a parallel text from *Ashtavakra Gita*:

You are neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor
either. In order to attain liberation, know the self as the
witness to all these and consciousness itself.¹⁶⁸

This interrogation or re-definition of the identity (which is eventually to be forsaken on the path towards non-dualism) is found in Bulleh Shah's famous kafi, "Bulla ki jaana main kaun..."

¹⁶⁵ Kalyan B. Advani. *Makers of Indian Literature: Sachal*. 1971. p 20.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p 20.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p 20.

¹⁶⁸ *Ashtavakra Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nityaswarupananda. Ramakrishna Math: Advaita Ashrama, 1953. Web. 27 Jan. 2019. p 21.

The Sanskrit text reads:

u i Foh u tya ukfXuuz ok; q| k& ok HkokuA
, "kka I kf{k. kekRekua fpni a fof} eQr; AA

Once these fixed notional and materialistic categories are undone, the Sufi poet goes on to redefine his existence and re-situate himself at par with and on an equal footing with the whole of creation finding an eventuality in the merger with God. This makes it enabling for the poet to attain unison and merger with the divine source. Kalyan B. Advani's translation, in *Makers of Indian Literature: Sachal*, reads as follows:

Sachu! God is One without a shadow of doubt;
The king in varied images sees His own spectacle;
At one place He is Christ, at another Mohammed, and at
another Hanuman;
He of His own choice has caste Himself in wonderment.
Man is neither an idolator, nor is he an Islam,
Neither Hindi nor Sindhi, nor is he a Shami
Neither is He in motion, nor is He static;
The Master is acting as his own servant.¹⁶⁹

Latif had denominated Sachal as his spiritual successor. Latif died when Sachal was thirteen years old. L.H.Ajwani in *History of Sindhi Literature* writes:

Well did Shah prophecy that the kettle or cauldron of
spiritual truths, which he had left in the boiling
stage, would have its lid taken off by Sachal, and the
dainties poured out for repast by all and sundry.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Kalyan, B. Advani. *Makers of Indian Literature: Sachal*. 1971. p 21. The original text in devnagri script as it appears in Janak Gorwani's *Sindh ki Triveni* reads:

सचू साईं ग़दमलै उकस 'कल खपकु
i f'gats rek' kks i k. k fml s fktj l jir ekfb l q'rkun
dkfks i <+ i kfk; j dkfks i <+ dgku
dkfks bā k] dkfks vgen] dkfks gupekū
हैरत में हैरानु, पहिजों विधाई पाण रवे।¹⁶⁹
nkos l s g\$ l py ; g dgrk] fl i [kpk gh g\$ ugha 'kd g\$
dk; ukr g\$ ml h dh l jir] [ksy ns[krk [kpk ekfyd gā
i <+k ugha /e/ xfk og] v\$ dgha i <+jgk dgkuA
dgha og bā k cu dj vk; k] dgha egEen] dgha gupekūA
vucl : i /kj .k dj djds [kpk dks gh djrk g\$kuA
(Srimati Janak Gorwani. *Sindh ki Triveni*. 2011. p 98)

¹⁷⁰ L.H. Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 125.

Few other Sufi poets of lesser fame have been documented in *The Encyclopaedia of Sufism* by Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram and *The History of Sindhi Literature* by L.H.Ajwani. These are Kutub Shah of " Jahania, Hyderabad, Sind (1813-1910) and Budhal of upper Sind (1865-1939)"¹⁷¹ (Ajwani, 154) and Daryakhan, Rohal and Shahu, Rohal's brother.

Ajwani expresses very close proximity between Kutab and Budhal's verses. S. Ram collectively gives a few examples of Daryakhan and Rohal's verses and expresses the reader's inability to distinguish one from the other:

When I perceive the Beloved in my heart, there is no
form.
It is only the fullness of love.
God is without form, 'Akara'..
She freed herself from self and saw that all the land was
His.
Eyes go on seeing, the Beloved grows more and more
distant.
As I go on forgetting myself the Beloved unveils
himself.
He that loving the Lord gave up
Kashi; forgot every care and anxiety.
Lovers do not stand in Kaaba;
They bow their heads in the shrine of the heart;
Mecca is not without, but within them.
Their soul is on pilgrimage every moment. ¹⁷²

3.8.7 Shah Latif, Bedil (1815-1873 A.D.) and Bekas (1859-1882 A.D.)

Bedil and Bekas are father and son duo of Sufi poets. Both wrote in Persian as well as Sindhi languages. Etymologically, 'Bedil' means a person who has given his heart away, and whose heart is in the service of another, the divine beloved. 'Bekas' implies one on a lonesome journey and no one to call one's own. Bedil whose real name was Fakir Abdul Kadir Bux was born at Rohri in 1814. Lam in one foot, Bedil never

¹⁷¹ L.H. Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 54.

¹⁷² Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p 220.

accepted his physical handicap as a deterrent to undertaking tedious journeys. In his poetry, he expresses great reverence towards Lal Shahbaz, Shah Inayat of Jhok and Sachal Sarmast. Sachal died when Bedil was in mid-teens and is understood as Sachal's spiritual successor, just as Sachal was called Latif's. Bedil's elegy at the death of Sachal is understood as one of the finest elegies in Sindhi language:

Wonderful was the magic of love in Darazan, my
friends!
Sachu was there, the intoxicated seeker, and the gnostic.
Heavy was the rain of yearning on that hero.
The pangs of separation were there, visible and invisible
Inebriated he was, truly, with the rapture of Oneness
Verily he was another Mansur, Love itself incarnate.
He was Attar Himself in favour and sentiment.¹⁷³

Bedil was a learned scholar, who is known to have been familiar with Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Siraiki, Sindhi and Sanskrit languages. Yet, learning did not mean much to him. He believed in the palpability of divine presence in the heart. Like Jami, Bedil believed that 'ishq-e-majazi' (physical love) is a stepping stone to 'ishq-e-haqiqi' (spiritual love).

Bedil's biographer Gidumal Harjani has contributed significant biographical details of both Bedil and his son Bekas as well as compiled their poetry. Bedil's Sindhi poetry exists in three volumes: *Vahadat Nama*, *Srood Nama* and *Faraiz Sufia* (Duties of a Sufi).¹⁷⁴ There is a detailed exegesis of life and death and the quintessence of human identity in Bedil's verses:

I am what I am. I put on various garments, and again
divest myself of the sometimes Hindu, sometimes
Momin... In this manifest (phenomenal) world I go
about, for the sake of pretence, by the name of Bedil.¹⁷⁵

For the phenomenal world, for the sake of appearances, he is called 'Bedil', but his

¹⁷³ L.H. Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 122.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. p 156.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p 156.

real identity is disjunct from the superficial denominations of Hindu and Muslim. Death is the gateway to the vision as well as union with the beloved:

Renounce all care of life if thou wouldst
 Drink the draught of love to avoid the fear of
 Knife shows but rawness of thy life;
 Oh, turn not away thy face from Death,
 Come, keep thy head beneath the chopping;
 Break all ropes that bind thee to earth,
 Bedil says, listen to this advice,
 If thou makest love, be faithful to the last.¹⁷⁶

Very true, Sufis are so eager to unite with their divine beloved that they woo death and desire release from earthly constraints to this physical frame. Love for the divine beloved demands absolute allegiance, notwithstanding death of the physical frame. Bedil's son Bekas had a short life span (1859-1882). Bekas took after his father in his allegiance towards Lal Shahbaz of Sewhan. He also did not spurn the sensuousness in human flesh and cherished it as a stepping stone to divine love. Likewise his verses evince a perfect blend of sensuous imagery and mystic content:

Separation from you has killed me,
 Come back soon, reviver of my life.
 Do not get angry with me, O
 Dearest, my heart's confidant! Let us
 Get together once again.¹⁷⁷

Bekas is known for his eccentricities. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram document his liking for star- watching and ecstatic singing in solitary nights. Having repudiated his ego, people called him 'Bekas'. The mystic expresses immense love for one and all. Death is the prelude to the vision of the divine beloved. Bekas shares with his father intense adoration of death:

¹⁷⁶ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. 12 vols. 2003. Vol 2. 2003. pp 219-220.

¹⁷⁷ L.H. Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. p 157.

The longing for the Homeland
Draws tears, day and night.
Beloved, this is the tragedy:
That to see thee is to be slain.¹⁷⁸

Here is the matrix of Sufism in Sindh within which Shah Latif emerges as a towering mystical figure, assimilating the rich legacy of Sufism from his predecessors, while simultaneously disseminating the essence of Sufism among his contemporaries and successors through his intense poetic articulations.

¹⁷⁸ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism..* Vol 2. 2003. p 219.

CHAPTER 4

BULLEH SHAH'S LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY IN THE MATRIX OF THE PROMINENT SUFI POETS OF PUNJAB

4.1 Bulleh Shah (1680-1748 A.D.)

4.1.1 Life

An out and out rebel against societal norms favourable and convenient to the upper class echelons of society and to the religious aristocracy, Bulleh Shah debunks caste and class discrimination and disdains the icy rigidity of religious orthodoxy. Bulleh Shah's life as well as death stands as an epitome of the rebel figure. The 'baaghi' figure, who never knew conformity, who proclaimed "mai baikaid, mai baikaid." was guided by his conscience and idiosyncratic sensibility. Against pedanticism and bookish learning:

Learning makes you a Sheikh or his minion,
And thus you create problems trillion.¹

As much as against ritualistic religious offerings:

You meditate and you say your prayers,
You go and shout at the top of the stairs,
You cry reaching the high skies.
It's your avarice which ever belies.²

Sceptical of official institutional ritualistic religiosity, Bulleh Shah overtly puts forth a topsy-turvy world, where the saint poet admonishes

Go not to the mosque, of it steer clear
If you wish to be free from anguish and fear.
Never read the text over which you have to think.
Let's go there, oh Bulleh, where they forbid not to drink.³

¹ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 55.

² Ibid. p 55.

³ Ibid. p 57.

It is important to be free of anguish and fear. Ritualistic religion inculcates fear of God. Man gets beleaguered in the trap made up of fear and anguish in an attempt to delineate his relationship with the divine being. This relationship is without faith. It is predicated on intimidation, discontent and anguish.

Bulleh Shah believed in levelling humanity to a common platform and chose to stand by the poor and the down-trodden. Bracketing a Sufi poet of Bulleh Shah's calibre as being influenced by Ibn Arabi and hence Islamic in essence or as completely an outcome of Bhakti and Vedantic philosophical schools and hence Hindu in essence is reductive and superfluous. The eternal saint bard outlives narrow communal confines and emerges as a soulful solitary voice articulating his inmost convictions:

Beyond and above this communal humbug, Bulleh Shah seems to incorporate and transcend all the contemporary influences till only a voice remains, the essential and irreducible inflection of speech of the common man living under the yoke of political and religious tyranny.⁴

4.1.2 Bulleh Shah and the Historical events of Punjab.

Bulleh Shah's verses present the contemporary historical and cultural aspects of the eighteenth century Punjab either through straight-forward and elaborate descriptions as in the critique of institutional religion or by referring to a grave political issue tangentially, while deploring its repercussion on the suffering masses. These aspects come to the fore through biographical accounts, through certain references to historical events and their repercussions on contemporary society as well as through Shah's ridicule of the delinquencies of contemporary society. Bulleh Shah becomes a student of Shah Inayat Qadiri, the low caste Araeen. Such a choice had the gestural energy of flouting caste hierarchy prevalent in society. Further, Bulleh Shah was completely disillusioned by the exploitation and corruption practiced by the so called venerable Brahmin as well as the Mullah. The Brahmin lays emphasis on the performance of rituals for personal well-being of the 'yajuman'. Shah's sense of ridicule is augmented by his dramatic style:

⁴ Taufiq Rafat. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. 2014. p 8.

Brahmin comes frightens the yajuman
Ancestors in trouble, he says
Must do something to counter the evil spirits
Perform pooja promptly, else you bear.
The pooja starts
Jaggery, rice, and a piece of cloth,
Take off the shawl, bare the trunk
Wear the sacred thread
Take drops of water on the palm
To the ancestors, offer, offer, offer.⁵

The sense of urgency in the repetitive use of 'offer' reinforces the Brahmin's own desperation and compulsiveness to create employment for him. Having nothing to do with meditation and concentration on the divine attributes or mystical connection with the divine Godhead, the Brahmin busies himself with the predatory act of 'yajuman' hunting and, further, busies the latter with the pooja ritual. The Mullah is registered as equally busy with planting problems in the minds of laymen and then offering solutions from the repository of his pedanticism:

A learned person, you are,
People call you Sheikh
You create imaginary problems
Swindle the simple folks
Suggest ambiguous methods
Everyday spell out new puzzles
What a dubious person!
Hoax in and out
Tells one thing and does the other
Inside out a sinner, a liar
Of what use is your knowledge
Why don't you stop it?⁶

In case of deliberate cheaters Bulleh Shah is unsparing, although he is lenient in his scourage of the the aberrance of the gullible laymen. The Mullah and the Brahmin are

⁵ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p106.

⁶ Ibid. p107.

conscious deceivers, who play all kinds of tricks to secure and fortify their power position vis a vis laymen.

Bulleh Shah also refers to the repercussions of the major historical events like the decline of the Mughal empire in the first half of the eighteenth century. Bulleh Shah deplores the Mughal atrocities which instigated the Sikh uprising. Shah expresses a sense of intense pain at the Punjab full of fidgetiness and commotion: "*Khula dar hashar azab da, Bura haal hoya Punjab da.*" ("The hell is let loose. The Punjab is in turmoil")⁷

Bulleh Shah condemns the loss of lives of both Hindus and Muslims and yet sees the turning of tables on the Mughal aristocracy as part of the divine plan in overthrowing the rule of the unjust:

Kaan laggar nu maran lage

Chirian zurre khaye

Bullah hukam hazooron aya

Tis nu kaun mitaye.

(The crows beat the laggar (leopard)

The sparrows eat the flesh of hawks

Bullah! This is the writ of the lord

Who can change it.)⁸

4.2 Bulleh Shah's and the contemporary cultural and folk narratives

Vinod Shahi, in a well-argued introduction to his book, *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Paath*, builds up an interesting backdrop to the entry of Bulleh Shah on the literary scene of India. Shahi explains how the traditional narratives pertaining to what he calls "mahaan saamanteeye yugbodh",⁹ the great feudal epoch started losing its efficacy due to loss of the aura and potency of those narratives moving around kings, queens and princes. However, unlike the western ushering in of a period of breakdown of metanarratives or grand-narratives of human existence leaving behind

⁷ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 108.

⁸ Ibid. p 108.

⁹ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 10.

little narratives, or figments of the broken, the splintered and the fissured human consciousness, Indian literature evinces a re-building and re-structuring of a new creative discourse. Like the phoenix, the creative process in the Indian peninsula has been able to resuscitate and rejuvenate its time-honoured narratives with the human impulse at resilience and re-instatement of its sanity, liveliness, morals and ideals for people to live by. Writes Vinod Shahi:

The splintering down of the story leads to the necessity of creative expression.¹⁰ (Translation mine)

Very aptly Shahi points out that there is a need to discuss narratives and their centrality to our lives as well as literary activity because:

The discussion of the genre of ‘story’ is central to the creative arena because it is a metaphor or a facsimile of the social order. Nature plants story in the psyche of mankind in the form of dreams. Thereby, nature replenishes and preserves the story, keeping dreams at par with the states and experiences of wakefulness.¹¹ (Translation mine.)

Vinod Shahi aptly understands the epic poetry of the classical literary period in Sanskrit literature as upholding life-affirming principles and the ideals for the fulfilment of the highest aims in human life. However, when life became more complicated and the hero worship and idealism of the classical period lost validity as well as veritable context, poetry moved on to express and conserve the meanings and connotations of those ideals on the ground work of reality. The narratives, discourses and teachings of Vedantic texts find a better, thought-provoking and dialectical rendering in both Bhakti and Sufi poetry. Both of them are, in some ways, dissident and emancipating; they present human connection with God on a metaphorical and symbolical plane and direct the readers towards spiritual up-liftment as well as social

¹⁰ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 9. Shahi's comment reads:

dFkk dk fo[k. Mu Hkh jpukRed vfHkO; fDr dh vfuok; Zk cu tkrk gA

¹¹ Ibid. p 9. Says Vinod Shahi:

dFkk dh dkr] l'tu ifjn'; ea bl fy, oDUnh; gS D; kfd og l'ekt O; oLFkk
dk : id ;k ifr: i gS vS mls [kp oqnr euq; ea 'Lolu&: i* nclj]
जागृत अवस्था के सह और समानांतर, रचती और महफूज़ रखती आई हैं।

amelioration. The Sufi as well as the saint gets greater liberty for creativity in presenting his metaphysical content:

In the times of the ascendance of feudal society, epics invest the story with a sublime aspect and make it the medium for the fulfilment of the highest purposes of life. But the moment hero-centric feudal period is objected to and de-contextualized due to an escalation in the complication of social reality, verse attempts to save the story through the use of symbolism or metaphors. The work of saints and Sufis appears more useful in accelerating social progress of that time period because they let the story get completely dismantled and then make space for discussion through the genre of the 'essay'. In search of the Indian foothold of discursive exchange, they attach themselves not just with the six schools of Indian philosophy, and not just with the Buddhist-Jain-Shaivite and the natha-yogic tradition, but also with the thought processes of the migrant Sufis from Central Asia.¹² (Translation mine)

This allows for eclecticism, inclusivity, freedom of understanding and dialogue, as well as greater creativity. This caters to the distancing from pure philosophizing and close proximation to human conviction through freedom of expression. It also

¹² Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. pp 10-11. Says Shahi:

सामन्तीय युगबोध के उत्कर्ष काल में महाकाव्य, कथा को उदात्त रूप देकर जीवन के महानतम उद्देश्यों की पूर्ति का माध्यम बनते हैं। परन्तु जैसे ही सामन्तीय दौर की नायक-केंद्रित कथाएँ सामाजिक यथार्थ के जटिलदार *gls tkrs : i k dh otg lsvkjfir o viki fxd glrh tkrh g& dk0; mudk irhdhdj.k ; k : idhdj.k djo* *muo ^vfk' dks fdl h rjg cpkus dh dk'k'k djrk g lark vlg l i i 0; ka dk dke] ml nlg o l kelftd fodkl dks xfr'khy cukus o fy, T; knk mi ; lsh ekne i Mfk g D; kfd os dFk dks yxHx ijk gh fo[Mr&foyf; r gls tkus nrs g vlg bl l s i sk gq varjky ea foe'kz ; k fuc/ dh enn yus o fy, xqtkb'k cuk yrs g fopkj&foe'kz dh Hkjr;* जमीन की तलाश में वे षड्दर्शनों, बौद्धों-जैनों-शैवों व नाथों-सिद्धों की परंपरा से ही नहीं जुड़ते, मध्य एशिया से भारत में सूफियों के साथ प्रवेश करती *fopkj/kjlvk l s Hk cklrxh cukrs g***

brings human being center-stage. In doing so, there is a re-definition of the hermeneutics of life through exemplary human principles and behaviour.

Hence, Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif bring the esoteric metaphysic of the classical scriptures down to the amphitheatre of common human understanding, steeped in the familiar folklore of Punjab and Sindh. The local colour and the topical references, folklore and the prevalent spacio-temporal strands of prevalent mystical philosophical systems form the psychological repertoire of the two poets firmly rooted in their native lands. Having entered India, the Sufis could not keep themselves absolutely segregated from the discursive mystical ideas of Adi Shankaracharya and the natha-yogic tradition of Gorakhnath. The early Sufis of the 13th Century participated in strict bodily renunciation, which was a part of scientific experimentation by the early yogic and tantra trends prevalent in India between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries. These strict voluntary acts of self-denial and worldly renunciation had crystallized in the fifteenth century in the bhakti movement, which then became a significant part of the matrix of mysticism in India. This experimentation in stern self-denial in a search for the quintessence of human life was adopted by Farid-ud-Din Shakarganj, whose strict 'deh-sadhana' is well-known. Writes Shahi:

Dissociating themselves from worldly temptations and imbibing an ascetic ideal, these Sufis search for the path of unmitigated devotion and absolute submission to God, and enter into an unparalleled and exemplary complementarity with the Natha-yogic tradition.¹³ (Translation mine.)

In doing so, Ranjha as a yogi becomes the connecting link between the 'ishq-e-haqiqi', the acme of Sufi accomplishment and the marginal rebel figure of the nath-yogi, denying worldly pleasures to him-self and delving deep into strict self-denial. Such a Ranjha figure has been established by Bulleh Shah as the divine Beloved, the exemplary figure and epitome of highest values, worthy of emulation by the earthly lover. Having placed this exemplary Ranjha figure, who is an amalgam of self-denial,

¹³ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. pp 26-27. Says Shahi:

I ka kfid izyktkuka Is vygnk gkrs gq] R; kxiw kZ thou'ksh o q tfj; s
HkfDr dh ryk'k o ekeys ea ; s I w Oh] Hkjrth; ukFk; kfx; ka o I kfk
vki I nkjh dh , d c'kdherh fel ky cu tkrsg

sublime values and unrestrained by narrow caste/class prejudices, Bulleh Shah himself declares his own 'baikaid' sensibility. Bulleh Shah overtly critiques the political decadence and communal constraints while being simultaneously conscious about how his predecessors Mansur and Sarmad were lynched and decapitated for speaking their mind. At this point, Bulleh Shah uses another tool of the Natha yogis: silence. Bulleh Shah expresses the pointlessness of expressing the truth to those who are impermeable to alternate thoughts. He connects Ranjha yogi with the Krishna bhakti of the devotional poets, but his emphasis remains on the immaterial and the mystical elements and not so much on the physical attributes of Ranjha. If Bulleh Shah refers to the mesmerizing flute of Krishna, which aligns itself automatically with Ranjha's iconography of sitting under the tree and playing a flute, it is only the 'anhad', the deeply intuited limitless cosmic music. Bulleh Shah's Heer is also reminiscent of the 'gopis' in their pristine love for their beloved Krishna and they meet on the plane of the human soul becoming one with the super-soul. The physicality of the two does not come into play.

4.3 Motifs in Bulleh Shah's verses

4.3.1 Dream verses reality

The dichotomy between 'dream' as belonging to the realm of the un-real, evanescent, and lacking in truth verses 'reality' as real, actual, abiding, palpable and belonging to the realm of truth does not sustain in Sufi paradigm. The question raised is 'how much real is the real?' The conflicting nature of the so called 'reality' with inbuilt factors of being impermanent, evanescent, fleeting and transient makes reality inauthentic. The so called 'real' appears dreamy because it is not immune to decay and death. And when the search for the 'Real' begins, we start searching for it in our dreams. The binary opposition between dream and reality does not sustain any more. Demolishing hierarchical preference for either dream or reality, Bulleh Shah says that he has reached a state of "naa jagadn naa saudn"¹⁴, meaning neither awake nor asleep. Transcending the boundaries between sleep and wakefulness, Bulleh Shah hopes to reach the final stage of truth, of 'haqiqat'. In this state, transcending conceptual boundaries created by the human intellect and human perception, the poet overcomes all distinctions, dichotomies and hierarchies and says:

¹⁴ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 80.

I found the 'One' inside everyone.¹⁵ (Translation mine.)

This is the 'advaita' condition where God is immanent in every iota of His creation. The truth of this world is like a magic or a dream actuated by the divine doer/ subject. Human being thinks he is the actor, but the divine 'Doer' with a capital 'D' is the ultimate actor. In this state of realization the individual 'I' is not disjunct from the divine 'T':

You ask whether it is magic or shadow-world!

It is the index of the ultimate Reality.

God is the real Doer of our deeds. 16 (Translation mine.)

Looking at the immensity of God's creation and yet an on-going process of destruction/death and decay and simultaneous renewal and regeneration, the onlooker feels a state of total discomfiture about his own puny existence vis-a-vis the immensity of God's creation as well as tends to bracket God's creation in the category of 'maya' or materialism belonging to the realm of transience or illusion or dream. Vinod Shahi makes an interesting remark:

Baadranya¹⁷ posits the empirical material existence and dreams as dual aspects of reality. But Adi Shankaracharya consigns them to the extreme of the realm of the unreal and the non-existent.¹⁸

But Bulleh Shah takes another step towards the integration of the transient and the permanent, the empirical and the mystical, the human and the divine. Bulleh Shah does not relegate the former counter-parts of each of these binaries to 'maya', instead he calls this plane of (un)- reality, 'jaadu' or 'saya':

¹⁵ Ibid. p 80. Vinod Shahi's original version in devnagri script says: "gj gj ns foPp gfj i k; k"

¹⁶ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 80.. The original Punjabi text in Devnagri script reads:

i nks tknw gsf d i k; k
vkg rka yls gdhdr i kjh
rd h djks v l kmh dkjha

¹⁷ Baadranya is credited with the writing of *The Brahma Sutras*, an exegesis of the philosophy inscribed in the *Upanishads*. An important Vedantic text, it has been interpreted variously by the non-dualists like Shankaracharya, dualists like Madhavacharya and modified non-dualists like Ramanuja.

¹⁸ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 80. Says Shahi:

cknj k; . k ea ek; k vlg Lolu] ; FkkFkZ od v}f : i dk fgLI k g d i jUrq
आदि शंकराचार्य अपनी व्याख्याओं में उसे अयथार्थ और मिथ्या के अर्थों में
xg.k djus dh vkf[kjh gn rd pys tkrs g d

It is neither ‘maya’ (illusion) nor a falsity; instead it is magic or shadow. If we look deep into it, then the two parameters of magic and shadow mutually nurture each other. The mystical palpability of magical astonishment transforms into the capability of witnessing divine shadow. They are the same in essence.¹⁹ (Translation mine)

4.3.2 On Attainment of ‘Baikaid Sensibility’.

The modus operandi for attaining the ‘baikaid sensibility’ is the one prescribed by Bullah Shah’s spiritual teacher, Shah Inayat. Human being needs to abjure one’s upper class complacency and renounce one’s bodily comforts as the essential pre-requisite for attaining ‘bai-kaid’ sensibility. One needs to abjure the fake respectability of the upper class ‘Syed’ caste and willingly hold the hand of the low caste ‘Araeen’ murshid. On the path to the divine Beloved, the true seeker willingly renounces his caste and class allegiance:

May be the dogs are superior to you!
 You wake up at night to say your prayers.
 The dogs are awake whole night through,
 May be the dogs are superior to you.
 The dogs in the night would never stop howling
 Sitting on the dung-hill as they do
 May be the dogs are superior to you.
 Nor would they leave their master’s door
 Even if they are beaten blue.
 May be the dogs are superior to you.²⁰

Elsewhere says Bulleh Shah:

¹⁹ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 81. Says Shahi:
 og u ek; k g\$ u feF; k&jpuk] vfi r q og ^tknw g\$; k l k; k* g\$ & Bhcd
 से गहराई में उतरें तो पाएंगे कि जादू और साये वाली जो दो अनुभूतियाँ हैं,
 उनके बीच विकास का रिश्ता है। जादू कौतुहल वाली आदिम आध्यात्मिक
 vu\$llir gh ckn ea ^l c dgha bz oj o\$ vDI ; k l k; s dks ns[kus dh
 अनुभूति बन जाती है। तत्त्वतः ये दोनों एक ही चीजें हैं।

²⁰ Sain Bulleh Shah: *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p131.
 Original version in Devnagri script says:

“थीवें चाक अराई दा
 कुत्ता सूर सराई दा।” (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 87)

Better than Bulleh is an oven
Which bakes the dough in leaven.²¹
Better than Bulleh is a sandstone
Which gives the feet a smooth tone.²²

Attainment of God requires relinquishing one's upper caste pride and complacency. A faithful dog at the gate of an inn ('sarai') is better than the humans who wallow in the façade of upper caste sensibility. The dedicated devotee imbibes humility. The seeker, according to Bulleh Shah, undergoes a loss of caste and class identity. The dog at the mercy of the inn-keeper does not have a permanent home, but at the same time he does not remain restricted by the control of the master. This is how the human seeker can attain a *baikaid* sensibility. His condition becomes analogous to a dog or a pig, with no fixed home or identity. He loses his home, but it is essentially in this recurrent process of losing one's worldly identity and materialistic connections that the true seeker approaches an unfettered mystical connection with the divine Beloved. In this state of leaving the home, the seeker realizes "aivein kaidi..." meaning that those who bear the crown are themselves the prisoners. In reality, these earthly kings do not have an identity of their own. Here, Bulleh Shah lays emphasis on renouncing worldly comforts, renunciation of one's false sense of pride so that the human lover debases himself as the divine Beloved's 'sweepress'.²³

Bulleh Shah's 'baikaid' sensibility cannot be attained in anything less than such a change in one's class and caste position. Another pre-requisite for the attainment of 'baikaid' sensibility is detachment oneself from illusive worldliness and materialist pleasure seeking ethos and to get settled in the zone of universal/divine love. Bulleh Shah's murshid Shah Inayat referred to the similar process of transplantation of human sensibility from 'here to there'. The process is highly unsettling and disturbing. But, renunciation of one's roots in worldly comforts opens the way to the divine realm. Bulleh Shah, too, leaves his high caste 'Syed' identity and stands steadfastly beside his low caste 'Araeen' murshid, Shah Inayat. Caste-less and class-less, such a person is given derogatory adjectives by convention-bound society. There

²¹ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 227

²² *Ibid.* p 227.

²³ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 113. The original version in Devnagri script reads:

es pñMvfm+ vka os l Pps l kfgc nh l jdkjka

ध्यान दा छज्ज ज्ञान दा हाडू,

बुरे अमल नित्त झाड़ो रहाड।

are two reasons for the need to break through socially defined class and caste respectability: one, the need to renounce worldly comforts and two, need to relinquish false respectability, which is illusive and which crystallizes human ego. It is not one's social position but one's action which defines human identity.

4.3.3 On knowing the un-knowable: the path of 'advaita'.²⁴

Shahi's appreciation of Bulleh Shah is about Bulleh Shah's endorsement of God's immanence in the created magical world ('*jadoo*') or shadow world ('*saaya*'). God's creation is not to be relegated to unreality and to nothingness. But the created universe as an act of divine creation is understood as an index of His divinity. Understanding the connection between the two is to annihilate the gap between them. In the mystical understanding between the two, the affirmative human instinct is a reciprocal understanding and unfolding of the two, eventually nullifying the distinction between them. This is the acme of Bulleh Shah's 'advaita' or non-dualistic' vision, divested of all wrangling and altercation. There is no space for dissension or disputation in this state of non-dualism. Instead of the polemics of the mortal and the immortal, the human and the divine, there is sheer affinity and harmony between the two realms. The human becomes an index of the divinity; the seeker and the sought, the human doer and the divine controller/ observer merge into a single whole. In the famous vision of Bayazid al Bistami, the human lover becomes a witness to his own enthronement on the seat of God. To his utter surprise, the 'I' and the 'thou' become one. Al- Hallaj's "I am truth" and Adi Shankara's "Aham Brahmasmi" correspond to this realization. The effacement or abnegation of the identity of the consciousness as the human 'I', as the doer, and an entity independent of the divine 'I' is aptly desired by the mystical poet. This is in accordance with the dream-like, evanescent nature of human life, circumscribed by equally transitory and fleeting nature of materialist and empirical world around him, subject to decay and death. Self itself becomes symbolic of the momentary and the fleeting world of experiences and objects and the visible reality around it. From this perspective, the normative realistic world becomes more dream-like. It becomes difficult to say anything with certainty and, in this state, Bulleh Shah remarks "*Bullah ki jaana mai kaun*".²⁵ All definitions need to be re-defined. All givens and pre-conceived notions about one's identity and one's place in the universe are under erasure. The hitherto realm of 'real' has entered

²⁴ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. pp 89-90.

²⁵ Ibid. p 150.

the zone of the 'un-real'. The 'Real' and the abiding, the permanent and the true, need to be investigated all over again. For this, one needs to start afresh zeroing down one's knowledge and existence to nothingness by eliminating all defining categories, binaries and knowledge systems, through a process of negation. Says Bulleh Shah that he is neither this nor that, neither he belongs to this religion nor that:

I know not who I am.
 I am neither a believer going to the mosque.
 Nor given to non-believing ways.
 Neither clean nor unclean.
 Neither Moses nor Pharaoh.
 I know not who I am.
 I am neither among sinners nor among saints;
 Neither happy nor unhappy.
 I belong neither to water nor to earth.
 I am neither fire nor air.
 I know not who I am.²⁶

In the present kafi, Bulleh Shah denies being contained by the dichotomies which govern human discourses. Says Bulleh that he is neither pious nor impious, neither pure nor pure, neither in a state of sleep nor in wakefulness, neither in happiness nor

²⁶ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 31.
 The original version in Devnagri script reads:

çÿyk dh tk. kka eš dks k!
 uk eš ekeu foPp el hrlk
 uk eš foPp oq i ōj nhvka jhrk
 uk eš i kdka foPp i yhrk
 uk eš eil k u i ōjvksA
 çÿyk dh tk. kka eš dks k!
 uk eš vñj on fdrkck
 uk eš foPp Hkaka u 'kjckla
 uk foPp fjUnka eLr [kjckk
 uk foPp tkx.k uk foPp l ks k!
 çÿyk dh tk. kka eš dks k!
 uk foPp 'kknhi uk xeukdh
 uk eš foPp i yhrh i kdhi
 uk eš vkch uk eš [kkdh]
 uk eš vkfr'k uk eš i ks ka
 çÿyk dh tk. kka eš dks ka (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 150.)

in sorrow, neither in water nor in earth, neither a Hindu nor a Turk, neither an Arab nor a Lahori. Eventually, he explains the essence of Bulleh Shah as the most intelligent. And the question posited in the opening line is answered in another verse, where he says:

How should I know, who I am?
My caste is what is reflected in me.
I am the like of him whom I adore.²⁷

In order to know one's true self, according to Bulleh Shah, one needs to 'un-know' oneself in the worldly sense. Instead of going on the teleological rational path of 'I know this at least and I am surely this, if not anything else', Bulleh Shah follows the reverse path, affirming 'I am not this at least and I am surely not this, if anything else'. Like seeds dipped in water undergo a process of osmosis and absorb water surrounding them, humans have absorbed ideas, concepts and knowledge systems from the empirical world. Having been filled with these evanescent material notions about oneself, man needs to undergo a process of reverse-osmosis to empty himself of materialist ideas and the baggage of pre-conceived notions in order to reach his true essence.

This process of un-knowing oneself in the worldly sense involves diving into the ocean of divine love which has as its concomitant universal love. Hence, to find Ranjha and to become one with him, the human lover-poet needs to lose himself in 'ishq' or love for the divine Beloved. In this state of losing one's normative consciousness, the human lover forgets to even offer prayer to the divine Beloved:

²⁷ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 215.

The original Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

dh tk.kk es dkbz os vfmvkj dh tk.kk es dkbA

ts dkbz vlnj cksy pkyj tkr vl kmh l kbz

ftl ns ukky es ugq yxk; kj vkgk tgh gkbz dh tk.kk es dkbA

मुझे क्या पता कि मैं कोई हूँ

ejsh khrij tskcyrk pkyrk g\$ ogh ejh tkfr g\$

मैंने जिससे प्रेम किया है, मैं उसी के समान हो गयी हूँ। (Vinod Shahi.

Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path. 2012. p 152.)

He who arrives at His place

He forgets even to salute.²⁸

Amir Khusrau voiced a similar sentiment in his famous utterance: “*Chaap tilak sab cheeni re mose naina milaaike.*” Similarly, *Geet Govinda* presents Krishna's gopis so mesmerized and enchanted by the call of Krishna's divine flute, the epitome of cosmic music of universal harmony, that they forget themselves, their etiquettes and their daily chores. Their love and intense longing for union with their divine beloved compels them to leave their hearth and home, bare-footed, to participate in the divine-dance, the 'raas-leela' performed by Lord Krishna and his human lovers. *Geet Govinda* describes the Lord's replication into as many Krishnas as there are gopis and the performance of the divine-dance, where the lover and the beloved, the human and the divine unite into a mystic whole. At another level, it is interpreted that only the souls of the gopis travel to participate into a holy communion with Krishna, the Supreme consciousness. This interpretation was required to counter the detractors of the ritikaal poets and the criticism visited upon them for the supremacy of 'shringar rasa' in ritikaal poetry, thereby demeaning and marginalizing its mystical import.

4.4 Bulleh Shah's eclecticism and inclusivity

The eclecticism and inclusivity at the heart of Bulleh Shah is apparent in Bulleh Shah's take on the contemporary politics of his time. He expresses non-partisanship in the prevalent Shia-Sunni tussle and disapproves of the Naqshbandi antipathy towards Shia community and their disfavour of the Quadiriyya sufis. Naqshbandis indulged in overweening self-superiority and demeaned all those who dissented from their political decisions. They were against the humanitarian principles of Sunnis and Qadiriyyas. The latter attempted to frame an understanding of parity among individuals. Shias promulgated condescension towards the non-Muslims and imposed special taxes on them called 'jazia'. The Quadiriyyas opposed such disparity. Bulleh Shah, often considered as belonging to the Quadiriyya order, was definitely against social injustice and communal

²⁸ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 53.

The original version in devnagri script reads:

b'd Hk;k; k fl tnk rjka (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 84.)

disparity. Yet, he outgrows involvement in Shia-Sunni politics and views it from a vantage point beyond narrow schismatic confines. Instead of criticizing staunch Sunni ideology, Bulleh Shah disdains Shia-Sunni dichotomy itself:

He refers to Hussain and Yazid as being symbolic of the conflict between good and evil but considers it in the monistic sense, thus avoiding a clear-cut identification of the sectarian conflict within the South Asian Muslim community after the eclectic reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. His scorn of Shia-Sunni politics is, however, frequently and more forcefully expressed.²⁹

Bulleh Shah's in Toto sensibility considers involvement in Shia- Sunni politics as unworthy and an excrescence. It is their own ignorance which confines human beings within such categories. Hence, as regards Bulleh Shah's diminution of Shia-Sunni conflict, we can understand it as a result of Bulleh Shah's mystical sensibility which discredits and deconstructs the conventional binaries of black and white, virtue and vice, piety and impiety as absolute and irrevocable categories. When confronted with the overwhelming potency of love, both the counterparts of these dichotomies in the discursive speech patterns, operative in linguistic structure, are dismantled. Says Bulleh Shah:

The love of the 'Shah' or the teacher of Bulleh Shah is astonishing. He offers redemption even to the 'avgunhaara' (without virtue).³⁰ (Translation mine.)

These dichotomies get constructed in the empirical/phenomenal world and must be left behind. Bulleh Shah's mystical system welcomes the true lover in his fold and willingly forgets all of his discrepancies.

Let us not forget how Shah Abdul Latif also said that he belongs to the space between Shias and Sunnis, denying material existence and any real distinction between the two.

²⁹ Taufiq Rafat. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. 2014. p 19.

³⁰ The original text in Devnagri script reads:

cīys 'lqī nī i hīr vuklīh

rlījs voxpūlījs ul (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 170)

Here are Sufi saint poets whose '*bai kaid*' sensibility blatantly refused to be tied up with man-made worldly discourses. Such schismatic discourses are nothing to Sufi saint poets who wallow in the '*ishq*' of One God. Bulleh Shah as well as Shah Latif call Him variously as call him Allah, Kanha, Ram or Hanuman. This is '*anhad naad*', the celestial, divine music without limits and boundaries, a song palpable only in a state of meditation and mystical communion with the divine springs of human life, which unites the seeker and the sought into the great unity of Being, the realization of '*wahadat al wujud*'.

Bulleh Shah's inclusive sensibility becomes palpable time and again in his verses which evince an undisputed influence of the north Indian bhakti tradition. Bulleh Shah's register resembles Kabir's use of Hindustani or khari boli, a popular mixture of Persian and Hindi. Bulleh Shah also uses the Vaishnava worldview. His presentation of God as a thief is reminiscent of a similar motif in Mira Bai's mystical verses, where he appears as Giridhar Gopal, pilfering the hearts of love-lorn gopis and disporting with them in innumerable replicas, as the divine manifestation of one Supreme Godhead into many.

Where, on the one hand, Bulleh Shah makes soulful deployment of local romances like Mirza Sahiban, Sassi Punhu as well as romances of the Arabic folk tales; simultaneously Bulleh Shah revels in alluding to the mystical intonations of Radha Krishna bhakti tradition and the confluence of Ranjha the divine Beloved and the image of Krishna, the cowherd playing the eternal music of the flute in an ideal pastoral setting. This eclecticism makes Bulleh Shah a Sufi par excellence.

4.5 Bulleh Shah vis-à-vis the prominent Sufi poets of Punjab

Prominent Sufi poets of Punjab which constitute the matrix of Sufism in Punjab apart from Bulleh Shah are Baba Farid, Shah Hussain, Sultan Bahu, Ali Haider and Khwaja Ghulam Farid and it would be an interesting exercise to understand Bulleh Shah's position vis-à-vis this prominent Sufi tradition.

4.5.1 Bulleh Shah and Baba Farid (1179-1266 A.D.)

The National Institute of Punjab Studies understood the commendable project of presenting the slokas of Baba Farid, Bulleh Shah's kafis, Waris Shah's *Heer* and Fazal Shah's *Qissa Sohni- Mahiwal* in devnagri script along with the interpretation of verses in

Hindi. In doing so, these texts with intense spiritual import became available to the readers incapacitated to read Punjabi Gurmukhi script. Such readers, ardently interested in reading the aforementioned Punjabi Sufi poets could get the pulse of the musicality and mellifluousness of the original verses of the poets along with the meanings of these verses. The reader, hence, comes very close to the original Punjabi text. It is not impertinent to mention that the Punjabi text is not completely indecipherable or alien to the north Indians familiar with the Hindi language. Baba Farid's verses are known for their simplicity of diction and musicality. It is a pleasure to read them in devnagri transcription. Baba Farid's biographers like Bhai Veer Singh and Bakhshish Singh derive his lineage from the Badshah of Kabul, Farrukh Shah. They also document the fact that Baba Farid's grandfather got married to Mahmud of Ghazni's sister.³¹

Baba Farid was born in Punjab, village Khowala near Multan. Born in 1173c., Baba Farid belongs to that stream of incipient Sufism which got initiated into a genuine quest for the Supreme Reality through a process of chalking out a self-defined path for the attainment of God. Farid belongs to that strand of Sufism which held complete allegiance to the Holy *Quran*, the holy text. He takes off his spiritual journey from this point. Further, without any sense of revolt against prescriptive religion, though still perhaps due to lack of inner satisfaction, they move on with their quest for the true meaning of life, search for God and the path for the attainment of God. Hence, Baba Farid is known to have learned the *Quran* by heart and read the 'namaz' without fail and duly performed 'haj' and observed obeisance at Mecca and Medina.

Baba Farid had strict and extreme rounds of self-abnegation. He underwent prolonged periods of extreme asceticism. Writes Namwar Singh:

It is also known that Farid lived in the forests for twelve years on his mother's orders. It is also said that he wandered in central Hindustan, Junagarh and Assam and lived only in the jungles.³² (Translation mine)

³¹ *Baba Farid*, ed. Namwar Singh. 2002. p 12.

³² *Ibid.* p 12. Writes Namwar Singh:

अपनी माँ के हुक्म से फरीद जी का बारह साल जंगलों में रहना भी लिखा गया है। यह भी कहा जाता है कि आप मध्य हिंद, जूनागढ़, आसाम आदि
dbz txg ?mes vlg txyka ea gh jga

The meaning of extreme physical renunciation was nothing but self-abnegation so as to concentrate on the other than physical desires, that is, desire of the soul for God and a 'real'-ization of this connection. Farid understood simplicity as the route to divine bliss. Here comes Farid's famous couplet substantiating the same impulse:

My bread is hard, hunger is my curry
Those who savour butter will have to suffer more.³³
(Translation mine.)

These early Sufis were not averse to conversion of non-Muslims to Islam. Baba Farid's grand-father had opened a madrasa for Islamic education at khotwal, where Farid was born. Farid himself is known to have disseminated Islam by his influence, and proselytised people of twelve 'jaatis' almost completely to Islam. Namwar Singh writes:

Baba Farid's times were different from that of present day Sufis. Sufi was as eager to disseminate Islam as was the sword-weilding King.³⁴ (Translation mine.)

Baba Farid belonged to that category of saints who believed in 'karishma':

You even gave amulets and magic trinkets. A special person was deputed to consecrate the amulets with divine intonation. The Kingdom was Islamic. Acceptance of Islam resulted in great concessions. Simultaneously, Baba Farid's devotion, sacrifice,

³³ *Baba Farid*. Ed. Namwar Singh. 2002. p 34. The original version in Devnagri script reads:

i Qjhnk jk/h ejh dkb dh yko.kq ejh Hkq[ka
ftuk [kk/h pki Mh ?k.ks l gfuxs nq[ka

³⁴ *Ibid* p 15. Namwar Singh writes:

vktdy ds l i i Oh ed yekula ds crkb ea tks dN fn[krk gs og i Qjhn
th ds le; ea ugha Fkka l i i Oh bLyke i Sykus dk mruk gh bPNqd Fkk
ftruk dh 'kj b&dkth ; k ryokj&tu ckn'kkg gkrk Fkka

asceticism, dedication and effective speech made
immense impact on his followers.³⁵ (Translation mine)

However Baba Farid moved on from extreme asceticism to remembrance and repetition of the name of God and his verses present emphasis on behavioral self-amelioration. Farid was not averse to 'shariat'. He overtly lays premium on ritualistic offering of prayers:

O Farid, get up, wash yourself and read the namaz early
morning. Cut off the head that does not bow in front of
God.³⁶ (Translation mine)

This tacit concurrence between offering prayers and remembering God gets splintered in the later Sufis like Bulleh Shah. The pattern of punitive intimidation in the face of non-observance of 'shariah' is absent in Bulleh Shah. Bulleh Shah's call is more precisely and conspicuously focused on individual conscience & an introspective turn towards the purity of heart and the soul. The reason for an introspective shift in later Sufis can be an escalation in impure intentions, double standards and corruption in the institution of religion as run by the Qazis and Mullahs as much as by the Hindu priests. The disillusionment with institutional religion and the prescriptive regulations, which vested the power-strings in the hands of religious clergy and bolstered their corrupt practices as well as their power position, led many from Guru Nanak to Bulleh Shah to retract their allegiance to Hindu as well as Muslim clergy.

Baba Farid prescribes contentment using the symbolism of bow and arrow:

If the mind is armed with the bow of patience, the string
of contentment is tied on it and the arrow of endurance

³⁵ *Baba Farid*. Ed. Namwar Singh. 2002. p16.

Says Namwar Singh:

vki rkcht+/kks Hkh fn; k djrs Fkh , d [kkl fy[kkjh ;g rkcht+fy[krk
Fkh jkt eq yekuh Fkh] nhu dcy djus ij cMh fj;k; rā feyrh Fkh
l kfk gh iQjhn th dk gB] ri] R; kx] o\$ kx] Hktu] cnxh v\$ ehBh
okD; jpuk Hkh vlj djrh Fkh

³⁶ *Ibid.* p 47.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

mBq iQjhnk mtw; kft l qg fuokt xqt kfjA
जो सिरू साँई न निवै सो सिरू कपि उतारि॥

is shot from it, then God would not let the arrow go amiss.³⁷ (Translation mine.)

Other qualities prescribed for human conduct are

(i) Compassion or 'dayadhvam':

Never say bitter words to anyone because God is present inside everyone; each life-form is a precious jewel.³⁸ (Translation mine.)

(ii) Humility and charity

Baba Farid explains the symptoms of a true devotee of God hence: an intellectual who considers himself unintelligent, a physically strong person who considers himself weak and a person distributes his share to the needy and the destitute.³⁹ (Translation mine)

(iii) Recognition of the fact of human mortality and the exigencies of the evanescence of material human existence and emphasis on good deeds:

If Farid knew that human life is short, then he would have taken every step cautiously.

³⁷ *Baba Farid*. Ed. Namwar Singh. 2002. p 61.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

l c j l n k c k . l q [l k y d q [k r k u d j h A A
i Q j h n t h d g r s g s f d ; f n e u e a l a r k s k (l c j) d h d e k u g k j m l i j
l a r k s k d k f p Y y k p < k ; k x ; k g k s v k j l a r k s k d k g h r h j m l i j j [k k g k j
r k s i j e k R e k m l r h j d k s f u ' k k u s l s p i c l u s u g h a n r k A

³⁸ *Ibid.* p 66.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

b d q f i Q d k u x k y k b l e u k e s l p k / . k h A
f g v k m u d f g B k f g e k . k d l H k v e k s y o A A
c k c k i Q j h n t h d g r s g s f d l h d k s H k h i Q h d k o p u (d V q o p u) u c k s y k j
क्योंकि सबमें सत्य स्वरूप प्रभु विद्यमान हैं। किसी के हृदय को दुखी न
d j k j D ; k f d i R ; d t h o , d c g p w ; j R u g s

³⁹ *Ibid.* p 65.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

e f r g k n h g k b b v k . k k A r k . k g k n s g k b f u r k . k k A
v . k g k n s v k i q o A M k , A d k s , d k H k o r q l n k , A A
बाबा फरीद भक्त के लक्षण बताते हुए कहते हैं कि जो व्यक्ति बुद्धि होते हुए भी अपने को
बुद्धिहीन मानता है, बल रहते भी v i u s d k s f u c y c r k r k g j v i u s H k x d h o L r q n i l j k a e a
(t : j r e n k a e a) c k a / n r k g j , d k d k b z 0 ; f D r H k D r d g y k u s d k v f / d k j h g A

O Farid! If you are intelligent, do not indulge in black deeds. Instead, introspect and watch your deeds.⁴⁰

Baba Farid's verses evince intense lessons drawn from the world of nature:

If you want to meet the divine Godhead, then follow the example of grass which is cut and quashed before it is offered at the altar of God.⁴¹ (Translation mine)

In another verse Farid invokes the virtue of the matchless tolerance exhibited by trees:

Baba Farid admonishes service to God, the master and to get rid of the illusive desires. The ascetic needs to become tolerant like trees.⁴² (Translation mine)

⁴⁰ *Baba Farid*. Ed. Namwar Singh. 2002. p 26.
The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

i Qjhn ts tk.kk fry FkkMMs-l æfy opQ Hkjha
i Qjhnk ts nrvdfy yrhiQ dkys fy[kqu ysfkA
आपनड़े गिरीवान महि सिर नीवाँ करि देखु।⁴⁰
i Qjhn th dgrs gsf fd ; fn efs irk gsf fd ('okl : ih) fry de gsf
तो मैं सावधानी से मुट्ठी भरूँ (अर्थात् सावधानीपूर्वक जीवन बिताऊँ)।
,s i Qjhn] ; fn nre vcl लतीफ (सूक्ष्म-बुद्धि) हो, तो काले लेख न लिखो
(अर्थात् जीवन में अज्ञान का अंधेरा न होने दो। (बल्कि) अपने आँचल में
मुँह छिपाकर या गर्दन झुकाकर देखो कि तुम्हारे कर्म कैसे हैं।

⁴¹ Ibid. pp 30-31. The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

i Qjhnk Fkhm i okgh nHkAA
जो साँई लोड़हि सभु।।
bdq fNtfg fcvk yrkMh vfgAA
ताँ साँई दै दरि वाड़ीअहि।।
; fn nre vius Lokeh i jekRek ls feyu pkgrs glj rks exz dh nrc dk
igys dkvk tkrk gsf fi Qj i sika rys jkhnk tkrk gsf rc dgha og i jekRek ds
}kj ea i osk djus ds ; kx; glrh gA

⁴² Ibid. p 44.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

फरीदा साहिब की करि चाकरी दिल की लाहि भराँदि।
दखेसाँ नो लोड़िए रूखाँ दी जीराँदि।।
i Qjhn th dgrs gsf fd i jekRek : ih Lokeh l ok&l pWkk djks vlg eu
ds Hkka dk fuokj.k djka i Qdhjka dk pkfg, fd os i M+ dh rjg
l gu'khy jgA

Baba Farid makes a poignant register of human mortality and the importance of humility. The verse is reminiscent of Alfred Tennyson's poem "Tithonus": "Man comes and tills the ground and lies beneath".⁴³ Says Farid:

Says Farid, why criticize the earth; there is nobody like the earth. When alive, this earth lies below human feet and supports his existence and when dead, earth covers the dead body, thereby, protecting it from scavenging birds and animals.⁴⁴ (Translation mine)

Farid is also sarcastic of human pretensions and materialistic inclinations:

Says Farid, when it was time to chant God's name, then you were entangled in worldly chores. When death approached close, you were loaded for the last rites.⁴⁵ (Translation mine)

However, Baba Farid seems to have gradually realized the inadequacy of external observance of ritualistic religious practices and inefficacy of extremes of ascetic practices in approximating the Supreme Godhead. Farid expresses the significance of the feeling of intense desire for the spiritual lover, which is the outcome of separation of a genuine mystic from his divine source:

⁴³ Alfred Tennyson. "Tithonus". web. 20 February 2019.
<<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45389/tithonus>. >.

⁴⁴ *Baba Farid*. Ed. Namwar Singh. 2002. p 31.

i Qjhnk [kkdq u funh, s [kkdq tMq u dkbAA
thofnvk išk rySepvk mifj gkbAA
, s iQjhn] feVvh dh funk D; ka dh tk,] feVvh ds cjkj rls dñ Hkh
ughā euq; tc thfor gkrk gš ;g feVvh ml ds ika rys gkrh gš
(vFkkz~ml s [kMk रहने की शक्ति देती है) और मरने पर उसके ऊपर हो
tkrh gš (vFkkz~i 'kq; i f{k; ka l s er 'kjhj dh Hkh j{kk djrh gš)

⁴⁵ Bakhshish Singh. *Baba Farid*. 2011. p 27.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

i Qjhnka tka rMq [kVV.k csy rka rw jrk nqñ fl Mq
ejx l okbz uhfg tka Hkfjvk rka yfnvkaa
i Qjhn th dgrs gš fd tc bz oj dk uke yus dk le; Fkk rc rw
l ka kfjd dkeka ea i al k gvk Fkka tc ekh dh uho Hkj xbz rc yk?k dj
ys x, A

Says Farid, “what do you search for in the midst of
forests and river banks?” God resides inside your heart.
Why do you wander in the forests?⁴⁶ (Translation mine)

Baba Farid couldnot stay away from the introspective turn, which is the essence of Sufi thought.

4.5.2 Bulleh Shah and Shah Hussain (1538 - 1600 AD)

Shah Hussain is an early Sufi poet with Hindu ancestors who converted to Islam. Hussain is revered in Dara Shikoh's *Hasnatul Arfin*, Mufti Ghulam Sarvar's *Haqiqat-ul-Auliya* and Maulvi Muhammad Din's *Bagh-e-Auliya-e-Hind*. Invariably, these works understand Shah Hussain as a Malamati Faqir, given to spiritual powers and ecstasy and eccentricity. Hussain was known for his abstruse poetic articulations:

I am neither static nor kinetic
Neither I am a Mussalman nor a kafir
I am what I am.
I was there in the beginning.
I am the past.
The present belongs to me,
The future I shall be.⁴⁷

The age of bigotry could hardly digest such supposedly presumptuous utterances, but there was nothing to deter Hussain who aimed to jolt the laymen as well as the dogmatic religious clergymen through his quizzical verses as well as his idiosyncratic appearance. He's known to shave off his beard and head as well as eye brows, get drunk and sing and dance in a state of ecstasy. Embracing the religious cult of Rama

⁴⁶ *Baba Farid*. Ed. Namwar Singh. 2002. p 44.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

i Qjhnk txyq txyq fdvk Hkrfg of.k dMk ekMfgA
ol h joq fgvkyh, s txyq fdvk <MfgAA
i Qjhn th dgrs g, s euq;] n txy&txy ea ouLifr ds chip vlg
unh rVla ij ?Mers gq D; k [kkt jgs gk\ परमात्मा तो तुम्हारे भीतर हृदय में
cl k gvk g n txyka ea Hkyk D; ka fi Qjrs gkA

⁴⁷ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 42.

as well as Krishna, Hussain sang of sterling piety, in whichever form it appealed to him. Lochan Singh Buxi in his book, *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*, explains how the Indian 'Bhakti' (devotional) poetry was taking the sub-continent in its stride and Shah Hussain's non-partisan sensibility did not spurn from reminding a sincere devotee to remember Rama:

Uth Rama Dhiay, vela simiran da
(Wake up, it's time to remember Rama).⁴⁸

and Krishna:

Sanwal Madha Yaar
(The dark complexioned is my bosom friends).⁴⁹

The use of Braj bhasha:

*Main Brindaban ki bairagan*⁵⁰

also brings Shah Hussain's Sufi poetry close to the Indian Bhakti tradition. The reason for such direct correspondences lies in the contemporaneity between Hindi Bhakti poets like Tulsi Das, Surdas and Meera and the doyens of Punjabi cultural, literary and mystic thought, Guru Arjan, Bhai Gurdas and Shah Hussain. The approval and acknowledgment of the former by the latter is evinced by the incorporation of Bhakti poets like Raidas, Kabir and Namdev in the seminal Punjabi religious text, *Guru Granth Sahib*. Together, the devotional Bhakti poets and the spiritual ideas embedded in the writings of the Sikh gurus formed the literary and mystical as well as philosophical matrix in which Sufism in India developed and flourished. An interesting example of the same is the folk narrative of Heer-Ranjha as incorporated in the verses of Shah Hussain. While giving a mystical tilt to the folklore, Hussain transcribes himself into the image of Heer, the symbol of un-besmirched immaculate love and Ranjha as the divine lover. In the Punjabi folk tradition, Ranjha is often moulded into the image of Krishna, the flute player, the cow-herd, who binds the pastoral setting, the world of nature, the animal world and the gopis in a mesmerizing

⁴⁸ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 42.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p 42.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p 42.

harmony. Shah Hussain, appeared on the literary scene a full century and a half before Bulleh Shah (1680-1758 AD) and yet he exhibits an amazing clarity in his mystical renderings. A fore-runner of Bulleh Shah, he seems to make a significant contribution in the making of Bulleh Shah's mystical framework.

Although Bulleh Shah does not take up the Heer Ranjha folklore in detail in his Kafis, there is an intense similarity between Hussain's rendering of the ordeals of Heer and that of Shah Abdul Latif's Sohini to meet Sahar. Ranjha and Sahar are the divine beloveds of earthly devotees, Heer and Sohini respectively. Both Heer and Sohini embark on a water journey to meet their beloved. Hussain's Heer ponders over whom she should take along with her to traverse the turbulent river:

I am bound for the village of my lover
Is there anyone to keep company with me on
This lonely path?⁵¹

Latif's Sohini also attempts to take the help and support of a baked earthen pot to cross the river. But, one day when by default she carries the unbaked earthen pot, which breaks midstream, she realizes the futility and non-dependability of all animate and inanimate matter to provide her succour in her spiritual quest. The splintering of the pot releases her from worldly-wise attempts at securing the divine beloved. So that finally when the lovers meet, Hussain documents Heer's confession:

How strange I have been shouting for Ranjha all over
the place.
But Ranjha is within me.⁵²

Shah Hussain emphasizes 'humility' as an essential pre-requisite to attain God. In a confessional style, Hussain expresses lack of virtue in himself:

Thy compassion I seek, O lord

⁵¹ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 47.

⁵² Ibid. p 59.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

jk>.k jk>k fi Qjka <Mnh

jk>.k ej's uk'y] uha es fduu vk[kka (p 47)

All my friends are full of attributes
The sinner, as I am I seek thy blessings.⁵³

This reminds of Bulleh Shah's gesture of self-abasement, calling himself 'avgunhaara', one without magnanimity and impressive virtues. Says Bulleh: 'Bulleh Shahu di preet nyaari, taare avgunhaare nu' (The marvellous aspect of Lord's sublime love is that the lord offers salvation even to the non-virtuous). (Translation mine)

Shah Hussain shares with Kabir the family profession as weavers. Hussain uses the metaphor of weaving to traverse the path of right action and weave the fabric of self-control and righteous conduct.

Make warp of Surti and woof of Nirti
Weave cloth of Truth, O my own self.
Hark; the voice of truth O my own self.
Do not hesitate, waste no time
Without Ram naam, you are sure to lose the game.
As you sow, so shall you reap.⁵⁴

Realizing the evanescence of worldly existence very early in life under the impact of his spiritual teacher Sheikh Saadullah, Hussain was on a perpetual psychological quest for the true source of human life. This led him to relinquish worldliness altogether. His verses often deplore the fact of human fascination with the temporal and ephemeral worldly existence, in a straight forward gritty style, with the aim of jolting the listener out of his quotidian existence:

⁵³ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. p 53.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

rkjha l kbz jCck os eS voxq kvkjh
l Hk l b; ka xq kofir; kq
rkjha jCck os eS voxq kvkjha (p 47)

⁵⁴ Ibid. p 55.

l gfr dk rk. kk fujr dk ck. kk
l p dk di Mk cqk ftns uhA
bd vjt+ i Qdhj nh l qk ftns uhA
dkgs dñ >ja rs >[k ekja
jke uke fcu ckth gkja
tks chft; k l ks yqk ftns uhA (p 54.)

Hussain, what is your worth?
 Gardens are full of merigold,
 The spring is at its riots.
 You are just the dirty linen, scented by association
 Perishable is the world around you. Why be proud of it?
 Discard pride, own humility
 Shah Hussain has given you the best of advice.⁵⁵
 Hussain insists that men should prepare for the journey
 after death of the physical frame because "space of the
 humble grave is your mighty possession for all times"⁵⁶

Shah Hussain's shrine at Lahore has become a site of communal harmony as it receives homage from Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims alike. Maulvi Noor Ahmed Chishti documents a marvellous celebration of Basant Panchmi at the shrine of Shah Hussain, under the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the lion of Punjab, another representative icon of communal harmony. The celebration of the Hindu festival at the shrine of a Sufi saint speaks loads about the religious sentiments of the organizers as well the participants and the legancy of communal amity among the laymen. The Basanti colour, emblematic of spring and joy as well as the colour of sacrifice for the nation or for a righteous cause, becomes the colour code for this festival. Buxi vividly pictures the proceedings at Shah Hussain's mazhar, hence:

All the ministers and officers duly dressed in Basanti
 colour would be in attendance and the Maharaja
 himself accompanied by the princes would participate
 in the festival... The colour of the season would run riot,
 so much so that the bridle of the horses, upholstery of
 elephants and sheaths of the swords etc would be
 draped in the same colour. The soldiers wore Basanti

⁵⁵ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. p 67.

gq lufdl clxs eyh
 clxka ns fop pck e: vk
 es Hkh fofp xz/yhA
 dMh nfu; k dMh ek. lk
 Hkyh nfu; k fi Qjnh i yhA
 NkM+rdCc] i dM+gyeh]
 'lkq gq l i kbz l e>yhA (p 66.)

⁵⁶ Ibid. p 65.

uniforms. The entire passage right from the fort to the mazhar was decorated with buntings and flowers of Basanti colour. At night earthen lamps were lighted and kafis of Shah Hussain were sung in Qawwali.⁵⁷

Here, we witness the sainthood of a true Sufi and the immortalizing of his spirit in the saint's efficacy and potent spirituality, which becomes a living presence after the death of his physical frame. This is the life-in-death existence which immortalizes the saint through the persistence of his ideals and subsistence of his verses, which have the efficacy of unifying humanity into a harmonious whole. The singing of Hussain's verses at his mazhaar in unison by devout Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs with their heads bowed in humility is a stringent retort to man-made schismatic voices, which create fissures between man and man on communal grounds. The description may very well evoke the burial of Sain Bulleh Shah. Khaled Ahmed, in a cogent introduction to *Bulleh Shah: A Selection* delineates Bulleh Shah's gracious burial at Qasur, after being denied last rites at the "communal graveyard"⁵⁸. Divine nemesis has been visited upon this act of gratuitous injustice since the same cemetery where he was refused burial suffers a ruinous state and the exigencies of increasing township have reduced the place to an execrable site of defecation. However, the tide of time has transmogrified Bulleh Shah's place of burial at Qasur with spiritual significance. The irony is that today, the much disputed Sufi figure is in demand, so much so that "the privileged of the city pay handsomely to be buried in the proximity of the man they had once rejected."⁵⁹ Bulleh Shah's tomb stands as a living embodiment of the rebuke to the heedlessness of the city's rich, their false respectability, frivolousness and false sense of pride:

The qawwals constantly sing his rebuking lines: 'Tamba chook- chook mandi javain'...Bulleh Shah lies serenely inside the dilapidated building of his tomb, its broken stone filigree-work proclaiming his indifference to the well-heeled buried around him... lying under layers of

⁵⁷ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 50.

⁵⁸ Taufiq Rafat. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. 2014. p 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p 1.

tinsel and flower, the poet communes with the cats that
sleep leaning against his grave on the cool floor.⁶⁰

Hence, the upper class echelons love to pay well for being buried in the vicinity of Baba Bulleh Shah. But Bulleh Shah, true to his nature, rests in his grave in peace, unaffected by praise or sham.

4.5.3. Bulleh Shah and Hazrat Mian Mir (1550-1635 A.D.)

Bulleh Shah and Hazrat Mian Mir (1550-1635 A.D.) belonged to the Qadiri order of Sufis. The great esteem in which he was held is evinced from the oft-cited fact that he was invited by Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Das to lay the foundation of Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar. Hazrat Mian Mir even offered to help the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, against the atrocities of Mughal King Jahangir. However, the latter declined Hazrat Mian Mir's help and believed in accepting whatever the almighty has in store for him. Hence, the relation between this great Sufi saint and the Sikh gurus was one of love and respect. Mian Mir had an impact on the contemporary Mughal kings as well. Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb's brother was immensely impressed by Mian Mir. After an in-depth research, Gyani Singh 'Brahma' has revealed that the birthplace of Hazrat Mian Mir is not Sistan in Iran and that he was not a descendent of Caliph Umr; instead, Gyani Brahma expatiates that Hazrat Mian Mir was born in Sivastan, Sindh. For this purpose, Gyani Brahma cites from two significant sources: the memoirs of Jehangir, called *Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri* and Hazrat Mian Mir's contemporary Dara Shikoh's *Sakinat-ul-Aulia*. The former of these sources express Emperor Jehangir's intense desire to meet Mian Mir due to Mian Mir's reportedly noble spirit:

As it was reported tome tat in Lahore one Mian Sheikh Muhammad Mir by name who was a dervish, a Sindhi by origin, very eloquent. Virtuous, austere, of auspicious temperament, a lord of ecstasy had seated himself in the corner of reliance upon God and retirement was rich in his poverty and independent of the world, my

⁶⁰ Taufiq Rafat. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. 2014. p 1.

truth seeking mind was not at rest without meeting him and
my desire to see him increased.⁶¹

Dara Shikoh's biography reiterates Mian Mir's birthplace as Sivastan, situated between Thatta and Bhakkar. but Mian Mir's friendship with Guru Arjan Dev has been underlined and Mian Mir's laying the foundation of Darbar Sahib of Amritsar has been unanimously consented upon. As the patronage of the extant Muslim king of India was a prevalent practice, Mian Mir also enjoyed the patronage of Jehangir and Shahjehan. But, in this relationship, it was not a political stratification of political and religious power of the two; instead it was the flow of spiritual experience and philosophic guidance to the Emperor in a mutually respectful relationship.

Mian Mir's genuine mystic pursuit is evinced by his spiritual graph. In search of a true mystic guide and murshid, Mian Mir came across a huge tandoor and to his utter surprise he finds

Some sort of sitting arrangement made inside the oven...
Mian Mir waited for the return of the mysterious owner of
the oven for three days and three nights this strange man
was Sheikh Khizr, Mian Mir's would-be spiritual master
who transformed Mir Mohammed into an angel.⁶²

Sheikh Khizr was a Qaderiya Sufi renunciate who became the torch-bearer for Mian Mir's mystical journey. Mian Mir led a simple and frugal life, remained celibate and observed "Gharibi and Inksaari- poverty and humility" and a life of submission to "Allah's hukam"⁶³, considering all human strivings as imperfect and submitting himself to the will and grace of God.

Mian Mir belongs to those early Sufis who had nothing against 'shariat'. For them, it was natural to understand 'shariat' as a stepping stone to 'haqiqat'.

He would often postulate that man is a composite of
three things: Nafs-Ego; Dil-heart; Rooh- Soul; and to
harness them in spiritual equilibrium; to be conducive to

⁶¹ Gyani Brahma Singh Brahma. *Hazrat Mian Mir and the Sufi Tradition*. 1994, p 2.

⁶² Ibid. p 6.

⁶³ Ibid. p 8.

life in meditation and submission to sharia't code;
 towalk on the path of Tariqat in the search of Maarifat
 and to embrace Haqiqat- Truth are a Sufi dervish's
 prime objects of sojourn in this ever-changing and
 vanishing world.⁶⁴

In *Sakinat-ul-Aulia*, Dara Shikoh (1615-1659) mentions that Hazrat Mian Mir's desire that his remains be buried in a desert place and to let them rest there without an erection of mouslem or tomb. This was Mian Mir's gesture of humility and self-effacement:

Soort-e-qabram ze baad-e-marg veerana khushtar ast
 Nesti maanand-e-amanba khaak khushtar ast
 My grave, after my death, better, be in a deserted state
 My mortal coil, better be with earth, mingle and mate.⁶⁵

In spite of Mian Mir's desire for being buried into oblivion, Dara Shikoh got a mousoleum sonstructed for Mian Mir. The same has become a monument epitomizing the sublime mystical status of Mian Mir and the high esteem in which Dara Shikoh held this great personage.

Gyani Brahma Singh recounts Emperor Shah Jahan's visits to Mian Mir. Purpose of such a visit was divine counsel and a chance to get initiated into the spiritually charged urs of the Saint's abode. Mian Mir is said to have refused the 'dastaar' or turban as well as had no use for the 'tasbih' or rosary presented to him by the emperor. Mia Mir's sentiment is expressed in the following words:

Tasbih-ba-man dar aamad beh zabaan
Gufta keh maa-ra-chira kuni sargardaan
Gar dil be-hamaan bargardani tou
Daani keh ba raaeye cheest khalagal insaan.
 The rosary wondered and spoke to me in a strange
 tongue.
 It said, "why dost thou thus make my head reel?
 Wert thou to resolve thy own heart instead,
 Thou wouldst know the purpose of man's creation.
 If at all stages thy path shall diverted be,
 The true goal thou shalt never see.

⁶⁴ Gyani Brahma Singh Brahma. *Hazrat Mian Mir and the Sufi Tradition*. 1994. p 10.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p 13.

And till the veil be lifted from thine eyes,
The Sun of Truth shall never rise for thee.⁶⁶

Hazrat Mian Mir meticulously personifies the rosary, and instead of himself moralizing about the unnecessary and mechanical exercise of rolling the beads of the rosary in one's fingers, makes the rosary admonish the efficacy of exercising the heart, instead, in uplifting the veil of the divine Beloved.

4.5.4. Bulleh Shah and Shah Sharaf (1629-1724 A.D.)

Born in 1629 A.D. in Gurdaspur, Punjab, Shah Sharaf is a Sufi poet of some repute, who got embroiled in the suspicion of adultery with his sister-in-law and as a gesture of protest against the falsity, turned a fakir and a murid of Sheikh Muhammad Fazil of Lahore. Shah Sharaf's verses are known to have been influenced by 'Gurubani', and in particular the metaphysical conceit of Bhai Gurudas. A specimen of Shah Sharaf's verse in English translation as produced in Sardar Singh Sekhon's *A History of Punjabi Literature* reads as follows:

Getting ground under a millstone, and heating the
colour into thick paste
And thus getting one's robes dyed, one acquires the hue
of Godliness...⁶⁷

Sharaf goes on to emphasise the intense process of initiation into the spiritual realm. Getting one's robes dyed in the ochre colour of saints is itself an acute process: "Getting ground under a millstone, and heating the colour into thick paste". The process brings with it the onus of saintly conduct. The exertion, sincerity and commitment expected of such a role is compared to "drinking the cup of [God's] love". "Living after many a death" is a reference to practicing life-in-death, as a process of becoming free from worldliness and from all desires and rejuvenating the soul into a new life emancipated from reductive worldly confines. It is peculiar to the Sufi saints to re-define meanings of words from an idiosyncratic vantage point. In Sufi paradigm, the meanings of life and death change. Life without God's love is

⁶⁶ Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal. *A History of Punjabi Literature*. 1992. p 19.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p 68.

death-like and death opens the door-way to a new life of union with the divine source for a soul wallowing in love for the divine beloved. The sentiment is similar to the one expressed in John Donne's sonnet "Batter my heart, three personed God". God is to be realized only after systematic and persistent act of abstinence, self-denial, self-discipline and abnegation of one's ego and materialist aspirations:

Drinking the cup of love and living after many a death,
Blowing it red-hot in the smithy and getting beaten with
a hammer, Dismembered like cotton and crushed like
Sesame, getting cooked in an oven, and thus lighting the
candle, Making a 'Rabab' out of love and getting bound
with strings, Singing His praises Sharaf plays on
Sarod.⁶⁸

The reference of making a 'Rabab' out of love and the intricate conceit of 'getting bound with strings' is the poet's way of expressing the necessity of unconditional love and unmitigated commitment for the divine beloved as a pre-requisite for attaining divine proximity and divine bliss. The song is not an objectively sung melody produced with a pre-conceived purpose, played upon an inanimate musical instrument. Instead, both the singer and the 'Rabab' are implicated into an act of love and absolute submission towards the divine beloved.

4.5.5 Bulleh Shah and Sultan Bahu (1631-1691 A.D.)

Sultan Bahu belonged to the Qadiri school of Sufis. He belonged to those Sufis who did not contradict the 'sharia', while himself not remaining restricted to it. . He was a strong supporter of ecstatic singing and dancing. Sultan Bahu, very much like Bulleh Shah, never endorsed man-made binaries like Hindu and Muslim; he never approved of the Mulla and the Qazi; and never expressed an intense desire for heaven or repudiation of hell. Transcending such man-made binaries, Bahu believed in soulful love of God:

I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim
I am neither a Mulla nor a Qazi
I seek neither hell nor heaven

⁶⁸ Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal. *A History of Punjabi Literature*. 1992. p 68.

Says Bahu without union with God
Everything else is false.⁶⁹

Bahu had nothing against reading the 'kalma'; his objection is only against superficial recitation of spiritual texts without ringing the chord within:

They repeat the kalma with their lips
Without a devout heart
Only lovers read kalma with devotion
Those who only talk hardly ever know Him.⁷⁰

Sultan Bahu dismantles binary definitives like life and death, East and West, day and night, truth and falsity. Given to independent, iconoclastic re-definition of given categories, Sultan Bahu emerges as a great philosopher engaged in unearthing the hermeneutics of life. Debunking the aforementioned contraries as conventional and postulated as contraries by the human intellect, Bahu emphasises the need for an introspective turn to glimpse the God within:

There is nothing false, nor is there a truthful path
Neither is there death, nor life
There is no difference between east and west
Neither in the day nor in the night
He is closer to you than your own aorta
Says Bahu, you have only to peep within.⁷¹

4.5.6 Bulleh Shah and Ali Haider (1690-1751 A.D.)

Ali Haider is contemporaneous with Bulleh Shah. Born in present day Multan, Pakistan, in the village of Kachian, Ali Haider's spiritual teacher appears to be one Shah Mohiy-ud-din. In a verse beginning with letter 'kaf' or 'k' picked up from Ali Haider's *siharfi*, we come across Ali Haider's total faith in his spiritual guru:

⁶⁹ Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal. *A History of Punjabi Literature*. 1992. p 69.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p 69.

⁷¹ Ibid. p 69.

*Kaf- kya gham khauf asan nu, Je Shah Mohi-ud-din
asadra hai*

('kaf', what sorrow or worry do I have
If Shah Mohiy-ud-din is on my side.)⁷²

Ali Haider discards the pomp and show of what is considered royal and aristocratic by worldly standards:

*Kura ghora, kura jora, kura shau aswar
Kure Bashe kure shikre kure Mir Shikar
Kure hathi kure lashkar, kure fauj katar
Kure suhe kure salu, kure sohne yar*
(False is the horse, false is the costume
Equally false is the rider king.
False is the falcon, false is the hawk
Equally false is the royal chase for hunt
False are the elephants, false are the battalions
False are the red robes, false are the dear friends)⁷³

The afore-cited verse is an epitome of Ali Haider's mystic ethos. To attain the 'True', the permanent and the abiding, the Supreme Being, human being needs to abdicate the untrue, the fake and the transient from his life. The scintillating world of nobility, fancy clothes (jora), royal horses (ghora), princely horse-riders (shau aswar) are the symbols of royalty, the falcon and the hawk, the elephants and the red robes. Even the dearest of friends ('sohne yaar') are unabashedly added to the list of the false and the meretricious worldly pageant which shall pass.

Ali Haider's mystical sensibility, very like that of Guru Nanak and Bulleh Shah, does not exhibit total obliviousness of the historical and the contemporary political milieu. Aware of the cause of the suffering of Punjab as artificially escalated Hindu-Muslim divide as well as the unfortunate loss of the reins of Punjabi politics into the hands of the foreign invaders, Haider registers his deep sense of pain as a witness to both the

⁷² Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 82.

⁷³ Ibid. p 82.

situations and often expresses the same with firm rebuke to the foreign marauder as well as the inefficacy of the vanquished in offering firm resistance to the vanquisher:

Shame on you the native soldiers.
 Shame on Turainians as well.
 The Khurasanis have plundered all the treasury.
 They have occupied and reserved for themselves
 All the water sources.
 The only water that we can see is blood.⁷⁴

Ali Haider openly puts the onus for foreign subjugation of Punjab on the usurper, but more so, on the native aristocracy, be it the latter's acquiescence, complicity or lack of potent resistance to the foreign invader. In a verse by Guru Nanak, the first Sikh guru's heart and soul revolted against the invasion of Babur and the gory sight of bloodshed ushered in by foreign intrusion and even rebuked God for his indifference towards suffering humanity:

Etī mar payee kurlane. Tain ki dard na aya.
 (O, God ! Have you not seen the destruction?
 How can you be so unconcerned? Why the fallen
 humanity could not
 Arouse your compassion?)⁷⁵

In his own style, Ali Haider expresses ideas the parallel of which are found in other Sufi poets. He expresses the momentousness of 'Alif' as against 'be', while picking up the argument of a preference for the straight shape of 'alif' to the secondariness of the curved shape of 'be':

"(Be) - Be di tegh na das Mullah, oh alif sidha kham
 ghat aya."
 (Be: O Mulla, do not show me the curved sword of 'Be',
 because in reality it is the straight 'alif' only)

⁷⁴ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 83.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p 84.

According to Haider's metaphor of 'alif' as a straight sword, it is more efficacious in attaining the divine Being as against the curve inherent in 'Be'. Along with Bulleh Shah's "ek alif padho chutkara e" (read the 'alif and that's enough) and Sultan Bahu's "jihan alif di ja sahi cha kiti/ oh rakhde kadam agere Hoo" (those who have learnt 'alif', they go on and on) (Buxi, 87), the reference is to simplicity and denunciation of unnecessary complication and pedanticism in traversing the path that leads to union with the supreme divinity. Sufis focus on direct rapprochement and union with the divine instead of resorting to rituals and the formalisms of religion. The latter is like beating about the bush instead of coming straight to the point:

People seek knowledge,
I seek only my beloved,
Those who trace him in the book of love,
They willingly forego wealth and belongings,
Those who have learnt the lesson of love,
For them there is no patience and peace of mind.
Haider, priest is worried about his prayer (five times a day)
But lovers seek a glimpse of the beloved (all times).⁷⁶

Here, Haider aptly attests to the Sufi model of perpetual and incessant remembrance of the divine Beloved. The concept pertains to purification of thoughts from attachment to worldly concerns. A true Sufi '*baaghi*' (revolutionary) Ali Haider does not hesitate from accepting, even proclaiming, his revolt against institutional religiosity. He prefers being called a 'kafir' instead of pleasing the arch-champions of the absolute authority of the rule-book:

For the sake of love, I have become an infidel,
The priest forces me to pray,

⁷⁶ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 97.

The Punjabi text in Devnagri script reads:

[kyd [kpk nh bYe i<nh] I kum bDdk erkys ; kj nk , A
ftUgka [kkyds b'd fdrkc fMBh] I hus I ji 0 rs le fol kj nk , A
ftUgka ; kj ns uke nk I cd if<+k] , fks tk, u I cj dj k, nk , A
gshj eYyka um fi Qdj fuekt nk ,] blgka vkf' kdk ryc nhnkj nk , A
(Vinod Shahi. Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path. 2012. p 96.)

Lovers have no religious fraternity,
 They break the string of the rosary and wear the sacred
 thread.
 People bow towards the Mecca,
 lovers bow before the idol of the Beloved.
 Haider, adore those lovers,
 Who have found faith even in infidelity.⁷⁷

Infidelity to the creed of the Mulla and the institutional religion has nothing to do with infidelity to God. Haider openly prescribes preference for being called a 'kafir' or an infidel for the lovers of the divine beloved. Immaculate and unconditional love for the supreme deity is essential for an understanding of and union with the divine source of human life. Ali Haider's unfettered sensibility expresses itself in many of the verses in the fashion of a true Sufi. Dr. Motilal Jotwni eulogized the Sufis as "the great integrators". Haider's integrative stance is visible in appreciation of affirmative aspects of both the Hindus and the Muslims as well as denunciation of the unnecessary superficialities of both. He rejoices in being called neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, but an infidel, whose faith is not to be restricted by communally guarded boundaries, but by love alone. The clear cut defining parameters of fidelity and infidelity, religion and non-religion are under interrogation and re-defined by the Ali Haider, another great Sufi with Bulleh Shah's 'bai-kaid' sensibility. The creed of knowledge and learning is supplanted by a pristine love for the divine beloved. Whereas the priest is fussy about the observance of the rule-book prescriptions, the true lover of God awaits a glimpse of the divine. And the ultimate realization and union with Him is found in the realization of the unity of Being. Positing his faith in 'Hama u ast' (He is all pervading and omnipresent), Ali Haider effortlessly inscribes this characteristic in Heer's attainment of her Ranjha lover:

⁷⁷ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 99.

clki' Qj gkb; ka l kg. ks ; kj i hNj eYyk gkdh fuekt i <kons uA
 nhu etgc ugha clkbZ vkf' kdka nk] rl chg rikM+ tatq xy i kcns uA
 vkf' kd fl tnk djns cr ; kj ns uA ykcd eDds um l hl fuckons uA
 gñj okjs tkb; s mUgka vkf' kdka n] ftgM+ clq Qj fcpka 'kgq i kcns uA .

"Les Siwahu Allah Hoo, Vich Heer Bahana mano Ma!"

(Heer is only a pretension, in between, otherwise it is
He alone)

"Mahi te main Wahid Wasil"

(I am one with my love).⁷⁸

4.5.7 Bulleh Shah and Waris Shah (1730-1790 A.D.)

Waris Shah (1730-1790 A.D.), of the fame of his magnum opus *Heer*, is eulogized for unfettered sensibility, unrestrained by the shackles of narrow caste or communal confines:

In the forests of Bindra you graze the cows,
In Lanka you attack and sound the horn of victory.
To Mecca you come dressed as a pilgrim,
O wondrous are the forms you take.⁷⁹

Waris Shah's dwelling upon the folk-tale of Heer and Ranjha, his placing the same within the socio-cultural milieu of the Punjab between the rivers Jhelum and Chenab and inspired by its natural beauty, Waris Shah's *Heer* becomes a living testimony of the Punjab of the eighteenth century. The region with its enchanting vegetation and topography:

With its great malva groves, fertile wheat lands, fields of sugarcane and lotus ponds... In March and April, the cotton tree is afire with scarlet blossom... From late June to early September, vast clouds move across the sky... By October the air is clear, the moon shines with dazzling brightness and at morning or evening, the plains of the Punjab seem to be touching the skyline enchanting in their rich ethereal beauty.⁸⁰

Coupled with the unparalleled beauty of Heer and the immaculate uprightness of Ranjha, a jat menial in the uppish household of the complacent family of Heer, a boy of high principles and immaculate character as well as irresistible charisma, fills

⁷⁸ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 85.

⁷⁹ R.K. Kuldip. *Waris Shah*. 1971. p (i)

⁸⁰ R.K. Kuldip. *Waris Shah*. 1971. p 3.

Waris Shah's immortal romance with irresistible fascination for his readers. Waris Shah's *Heer* does not underplay the passionate longing between Heer and Ranjha, but the parameters of love for both the lovers are marked by beauty and nobility, ability to ascend high and forgive injuries, overcome obstacles and make sacrifices. In an inspired moment, Waris Shah addresses his own poetic sensitivity towards pristine love as follows:

Oh pensive poet what is love?
Two souls and one flesh!
Two souls and one thought only
Two hearts that beat as one.
Love makes men rich in greatest poverty
Makes water wine; turns wooden cups to gold
It is the lovely whistle to sweet music's strains.⁸¹

Ranjha, the young Jat lad of magnetic personality, moral rectitude and social uprightness, is employed by the powerful and proud Sayals. Ranjha's meeting with Heer, the daughter of the Sayals is the watershed incident which changes the lives of both Heer and Ranjha. Ranjha is smitten by Heer's ineffable beauty. Waris Shah goes step by step in his delineation of the qualities of Heer. Waris Shah does not shun from an unequivocally sensuous and erotic description of Heer's beauty:

No gems, no gold she needs to wear
She shines intrinsically fair.
So fair
She takes the breath of men away
Who gaze upon her unaware.⁸²

Waris Shah's *Heer* delineates its protagonists through the method of breakdown of commonplace dichotomies which govern worldly discourse. Heer speaks of herself hence:

I am free! My mind is free!
I am neither sick nor a physician.

⁸¹ Ibid. p 12.

⁸² R.K. Kuldip. *Waris Shah*. 1971. p 12.

Neither a believer nor an infidel;
Nor a Mullah nor a Sayyid.
In the fourteen worlds I walk in freedom and,
Can be imprisoned nowhere.
I visit the tavern (without any fear of)
Libel or informer.
O waris, what do you ask about the
essence of Heer?
She is unbegotten and unbegetting.⁸³

Here, Heer recognizes her existence as independent of phenomenal discourses. Further, her love for Ranjha surpasses worldly sanction and approval. Her self-proclaimed characteristics as “unbegotten and unbegetting” and her defiance of being defined and contained by worldly categories, ‘believer’ or ‘infidel’, ‘sick’ or ‘physician’, ‘Mullah’ or ‘Sayyid’ makes her a true Sufi, who charts her mystical journey on the path of love, emancipated from worldly discourses which attempt to contain and restrain the human being within superficial man-made binaries. Sufis like Waris Shah and Bulleh Shah transcend worldly discourses and chart their own mystical teleology, and aim at nothing less than unison with the incipient divine source of life, while allowing the human estate to share the quality of being “unbegotten and unbegetting” with the divine font of human life.

4.5.8. Bulleh Shah and Khwaja Ghulam Farid

Bulleh Shah and Khwaja Ghulam Farid (1845-1901 A.D.) is documented as belonging to the later period of Sufi saints of Punjab and his exact time period is not mentioned. His lineage is documented as going back to Hazrat Umar and to the family of 'farooqis', acclaimed for their religious devoutness and renunciation, given to wandering and spreading the message of love in foreign lands. Having migrated from Arabia, they settled in Sind. One of Ghulam Farid's ancestors, Makhdoom Muhammad Zakaria traveled from Sind and settled in Multan in Punjab. His son, Makhdoom Noor Muhammad is known to have been revered by Shah Jahan.

⁸³ Ibid. p 27.

Khwaja Ghulam Farid was the murid of his elder brother, whom he loved and revered to the extent of attaining the state of oneness with the murshid, called the state of 'fana-fil-Sheikh' in Sufi understanding. His non-sectarian stance emanated a universal philosophy of love:

*Rakh tasdeeq na thi aawara
Kaba, kibla daer dwara
Masjid, mandir hikro yaar.*

(Just have faith. Do not go astray. Kaba, kibla, daer and haram, mosque and temple are all glowing with the same light).⁸⁴

In a similar vein, Ghulam Farid is convinced of the universal presence of God:

*har soorat vich yaar da jalwa
Kya asman zamin
(whether on earth or in the sky*

Wherever I see, it is the charming face of my beloved.)

*Har har ja vich Ranjhan mahi
(My Ranjha is every where)⁸⁵*

Ghulam Farid assimilates the terminology from Vedantic literature like "Krishna, flute, Raas, Avtar, Gyan, Prem"⁸⁶ and calls Krishna as 'Sanwal' as a gesture of adoration of the darker one, adopted from the Bhakti poetry:

*Do not be unfamiliar, O dark- skinned lover
I pray for your communion...⁸⁷*

It is interesting that in the same verse, Farid coalesces the identity of the dark-skinned Sanwal "Krishna" with Ranjha, the cow-herd. The latter, like the former, tends cattle and

⁸⁴ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 127.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p 127

⁸⁶ Ibid. p 128.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p 143.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

uk dj ci jokgh oks ; kjA fey l koy ekgh oks ; kjA (p 142.)

plays the flute. Whether deliberate or inadvertent, this tacit link between Krishna and Ranjha has been a part of Punjabi folk lore. In doing so, there is fortification of the divine status attributed to Ranjha. Further, Ghulam Farid converges the Sufi concept of 'hama ost' with the Bhakti movement's recognition of God in the whole of creation:

Wah wah Sohne da vartara

Har Soorat vich kare avtara.

(God is present not only in human beings, but in the entire creation)⁸⁸

Through his verses, Ghulam Farid creates an implicit dialogue with the divine Beloved. Full of love and intense desire to meet the latter, he dramatizes the situation. Other worldly-wise lovers paint themselves for earthly beloveds, but Farid adorns himself for the divine Beloved:

Whitening the teeth,

painting the lips, Toiletry;

The whole day gone.

I put kajal in my eyes

Powdered the cheeks,

Alas! The lover has not come.⁸⁹

Ghulam Farid does not hesitate from rebuking the latter in His postponement of the impending meeting:

I sent messages through the flying birds

Wasted the whole life in vain.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 127.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 1994. p 137.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

ed lx eyinh nk xqtj fx; k Mšj l kjkA

fl ækj djinh nk xqtj fx; k Mšj l kjkAA

dtyk i kbe l j [kh ykbeA dhre ; kj fol kJA

⁹⁰ Ibid. p 137.

The original text in Punjabi reads:

dlx mMinh mej fogk. khA vk, xk u ; kj fi ; kjkA

jkj Mxj rs txy cxykA jkfy; e 'kkd vkokjAA

But the meeting is not just expected, but an impending one. It is just a postponement for which the poet reprimands the divine Beloved. The lover poet ends on a note of surety that the beloved and he himself are meant for ultimate union with each other:

Pre-destined as it is,
Ranjhan is mine and I belong to him
Flame of Ishq (love) has completely subsumed my self
(ego).⁹¹

Farid is eager to meet the divine beloved. Life without the lord is 'unbearable pain':

Life without you is the unbearable pain,
It is like the treacherous death to me.⁹²

Without Ranjha, it is death -in -life like existence. Love of Ranjha is the essence of his life:

I know only the song of love,
born of love, brought up in love,
Bathed in the ocean of love,
I am nothing without love,
Lover boy you have struck me, with the sharpest
arrow.⁹³

⁹¹ Lochan Singh Buxi. *Prominent Mystic Poets of Punjab*. 1994. p 137.

The original text in Punjabi reads:

jkā.k eñk eñ jkā.k nh jkst+vṭy nk dñjkā
हिजर फरीदा लंबी लाई। जल गिओम मुफ्त विचार।

⁹² Ibid. p 143.

The original text in Punjabi reads:

rka fcu tho.k Mq̣kMk Fkho.kkA
I e>k eñs fol kgh oks ; kjAA

⁹³ Ibid. p 143.

CHAPTER 5

PARALLELISMS IN THE POETRY OF SHAH ABDUL LATIF AND BULLEH SHAH

Sufi poetry of Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah exhibits parallelisms in style, thought as well as subject-matter. In both, mysticism being more prominent than materialism; all complexity of expression, the artificial and ornate style, the tinkle of words and bombastic language is missing. Bulleh Shah remarks: “He who has found love Supreme, / he sings and dances out of tune.”¹ With love in ones heart, human being need not attest to the rule-book prescriptions with regard to rhyme, metre, melody and measured versification. Strong ground- work of simplicity and authenticity and the rich heritage of both the socio- cultural and topographical frameworks has enabled Sufi poets of Sindh and Punjab to express their adoration of God through intense images drawn from the world of nature and their immediate socio-cultural mores. Their rendering of the faults and lacunae of human nature has an apt sense of pungency as well as sensitivity towards human erroneousness. Both Latif and Bulleh Shah amply critique the contemporary society’s materialism and superficiality as well as ritualism and hypocrisy of the official religion. The groundwork of emphasis on the assimilation of sterling human values of universal love, the recognition of God’s divine essence as immanent in the human self as well as in every iota of the empirical world and simultaneous abdication of the narrow and senseless confines of casteism, pride and self-adulation forms the fabric of Sufism in the poetry of Latif and Bulleh Shah. Both the poets also present a parallel charting of the teleology of attaining not just proximity but union with the divine Being. The folk lore of Sindh and Punjab serves as a vehicle for such an accomplishment. In doing so, the two Sufi poets establish their belongingness to the two spacio-temporal territories and the people and customs and mores of Sindh and Punjab, while simultaneously exhibiting their intense understanding of the tradition of Sufi precedents as well as their immediate religious scenario. The aforementioned aspects can be substantiated through the poetry of the two poets, while understanding

¹ *Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 51.

their mystical enunciations through the prism of the socio-cultural fabric of the two regions, Sindh and Punjab.

5.1 Centrality of 'Ishq' in the poetry of the two poets

The meaning of 'love' is necessary to understand the quintessence of the poetical world of Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif. Ishq, for Bulleh Shah implies ardent and intense desire for union with the Supreme Being, with complete obliviousness of worldly-wise wisdom and a willing abdication of one's physical existence.

What are the lineaments of 'ishq' prescribed by a Sufi? The true- Sufi's love for the divine Beloved is characterized by going beyond worldly limits and boundaries. There are no half-measures in love. 'Ishq-i-haqiqi' demands absolute submission to the Supreme lord. The call of death is a welcome opportunity to attain the Beloved:

There is a call to gallows, friends,
will any of you go?
Those who do talk of love may know
To gallows they must speed. ²

There is a satiric strain in Latif's reference to those who speak of love. Talking about and proclamation of one's love for the divine Beloved is devalued by Latif. Superficial expression of one's love is not commendable. Making one's love for the Beloved apparent through visible signs of shedding tears or verbal declaration undergoes sharp criticism in Latif's verses:

Mother, I cannot trust in those
Whose eyes with tears do overflow--
Who bring the water to their eyes,
Their sorrow to the world show;

² *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 33. The Sindhi version reads
 सूरिअ सडु थियो, का लहंदी जेडियूँ,
 वजणु तिनि पियो, नालो नीहं गिन्हनि जे।
 I yhi us cnyk; k gS l f[k; k (npe ea l s) dku pyxh\ वे जायँगी जो नेह
 dk uke yrh gā
 Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 49.)

Who love Beloved, hide their woe,
No tears they show, nor speak about--³

The path to the realization of the divine Beloved does not go through physical sensual faculties. The mystical journey towards the attainment of the divine Beloved is an inward odyssey. It does not approve of a physical show of pain incurred by the human seeker. Instead, an ardent seeker does not even care for his life. In “Sur Sasui: Hussaini-XIX”, we come across the following lines:

Better in mountains cut and sore,
Striving for Punhu, die--
That all the world for ever more
Thy love shall glorify--⁴

The path of love is not an easy one. It requires a heart and a soul full of strength, forbearance and a capacity to bear all kinds of hardships. Raskhan, the devotional bhakti poet says:

Love's wayward path is slender as the tendril of a lotus,
yet hard as a sword's blade. It is straight and then again
sinuous.⁵

³ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 36.
The Sindhi version says:

आयलि! उन न विसहाँ, हज्जुं जे हारीनि,
vk. ; ks vkcq v[; fu e] Mg [ks Ms[kkjhfufu]
l t.kq ts l kjhfufu] l sudh : vfu u pofu dhA
माँ! मैं उनका विश्वास नहीं कर सकती जो आँसू बहाया करते हैं। नयनों में
uhj Hkj dj nfu; k dks fn[kkrs fi Qjrs g] tks fiz dks ; kn djrs g] os u
jkr's g] vk] u gh d]N dgrs g]
(Jotwani, Motilal, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*, trans. Manishankar
Dwivedi. 1969. p 57.)

⁴ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 138.
Sindhi version reads:

eq fl ! e: ejld l q fl fofp l jfr; a---
ej गई तो भले मर जाऊँ।
ससियों के बीच गई जाऊँगी-----\n
(Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar
Dwivedi. 1969. p 180.)

⁵ Krishna P. Bahadur. *Sufi Mysticism*. 1999. p 63.

Bulleh Shah expresses the predicament of the human lover for the divine Beloved, hence:

Your love has made me dance like mad.
 Falling in love with you
 Was like taking a sip of poison.
 Come my healer, forsaken, I am sad.
 Your love has made me dance like mad.⁶

However, a crucial aspect of this mystical love is that it is not one-sided. If the human seeker yearns for the divine Beloved, the divine Being reciprocates with an equal fervour. Says Bulleh Shah:

I have learnt a secret.
 A secret I have learnt.
 To win over Sassi
 He comes as Punnun...⁷

⁶ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 45.
 The Punjabi text in Devnagri script reads:

cgMh os rchck eMh ftUn xbZ/kA
 rjs b'kd upk; k djds FkbZ/k FkbZ/kA
 b'kd Mjk ejs vUnj dhrk]
 Hkj ds tkfgj fi vkyk eS i hrk]
 bc ns vkoha os rchck ugha rs eS ej xbZ/kA
 rjs b'kd upk; k djds FkbZ/k FkbZ/kA⁶
 oSh vki okfi l eM+vk] ejh ftin tk jgh gS
 FkS k FkS k djds rjs b'd us eS bruk upk; k gA
 b'd us ejs vUnj Mjk Mky fy; k gS eS Hkj&Hkj dj tej dk l; kyk ih
 fy; k gS vjs vls oSh! rjAr ykS/vk] ugha rks eS cl ej gh pyh gA
 (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 199.)

⁷ *Ibid.* p 43.
 The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

l l l h nk fny yVv.k dkju]
 gkr i qur c.k vk; k , A
 bd uprk ; kj i <k; k , A
 ,u xSu nh fgDdk l jir]
 fgDd uprk 'kkj epk; k , A
 ; kj us , d uprk i <k; k gA ,u xSu (o.kZkyk ds o.kZ) dh 'kDy , d l h gS
 cl uprs us 'kkj epk; k gS (tkS , d o.kZ ds uhps yxrk gS nll js ds ugha) A
 l l l h dk fny yVv.us ds fy, og tjk l k uprk gh i qur cu dj vk; k gA
 (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p106.)

Here, Punhu himself becomes small dot and desires to align himself with Sasui. Just as the dot ('nukta') and the alphabet are incomplete without each other, similarly the human lover and the divine Beloved are incomplete without union at the mystical plane. There is the idea of mutual longing between God, the divine source and human soul, the yearner:

Not only the thirsty seek water,
The Water as well seeks the thirsty. ⁸ (Translation Mine)

Sasui reduces herself to a naught for the sake of Sasui. Those who thirst for water, water also feels thirsty for them. Divine Beloved also hankers for the genuine lovers.

Often the human lover assumes a tone of intimacy, sounds a little presumptuous and rebukes the divine Beloved for delay in the latter's response to the call of love. In his Kafi, "*Hudn kis ton aap lukaaida*", Bulleh Shah Says:

Trying to hide, I've caught you.
Tied you with the lock of my hair.
You are yet trying to flee,
This time I'll allow no plea.
Enough is enough, talk to me with a smile.⁹

The relationship between the lover and the Beloved is so intense that it becomes incumbent on the divine Beloved to present Himself to the sterling love of the earthly lover. The most appealing aspect of Sufi poetry of Bulleh Shah and Shah Abdul Latif is their fearless approach towards God. Rapport between God and human being is predicated on love and not on fear. Relation based on intimidation cannot have veracity and probity and honest dedication towards the object of love. Bulleh Shah addresses God as "my

⁸ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*, trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 125.
The Sindhi version in Devnagri script reads:

साजन कारणि सुज, मरू कबूले ससुई,
अंदरि जिनीं उज, पाणी उज्यो उनिखे।
I l pZ l ktu ds fy, Hkys 'kū; gh LohdkjA ftuds vlnj l; kl jgrh gS
muds fy, i kuh Hkh fi i kfl r gh jgrk gA l Pps vkf'kdka ds fy, egcic
Hkh ykykf; r gh jgrk gA

⁹ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 41.

dear". Here, the relationship between the earthly lover and the divine Beloved is one of intimacy ('uns') and not that of a sense of awe ('haybat'). The lover is overwhelmed by divine beauty ('jamal') and not by his majesty ('jalal'). The former has the tendency to bring the lover and the Beloved close to each other, the latter distances one from the other.

Bulleh Shah sounds presumptuous in assuming an intimate tone about the divine Beloved:

I curse Ranjha overtly, but pray for Him inside. I have
become one with Ranjha. Distinction is for the ignorant
onlooker.¹⁰ (Translation mine)

Bulleh Shah's cursing the divine Beloved is a gesture of intimacy and endearment. This sense of intimacy often takes the form of an open interrogation of the divine Beloved for His delinquency in not performing his duty properly. Says Bulleh:

Mansur came to you
You sent him to the gallows
You hanged him mercilessly
He was my dear brother
Now you have to compensate for him.¹¹

¹⁰ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012.. p 120. The Punjabi version reads:

jka>s u eš xkfyvka nola
eu foPp djka nq/kbA
eš rs jka>k boks gkb
npl ykdk u vtekbA¹⁰
मैं ऊपर-ऊपर से उसे (रांझे को) गालियां देती हूँ, पर भीतर से दुआएं निकलती
gA eš vlg jka>k , d gks x, gA npl rks nfu; k ds fy, gA

¹¹ Ibid. p 138. The Punjabi version reads:

eul j r q ka oYy vk; k l h
r q ka l y h i dM+p<k; k l h
vlg ejk HkbbZ ckcy tk; k l h
ns [k flogk ejk HkbbZ nk
gqk fdl rka vki ypkbzhk\ ¹¹
eul j r f gkj h vlg vk; k Fk
r eus ml s i dMoj l y h p<k fn; k
og ejk ckcy tk; k HkbbZ Fk
vc ejk ml HkbbZ dk eq/kotk r fga nuk gA

In Bulleh Shah and Shah Abdul Latif, the sense of psychological proximity is palpable between the earthly lover and the divine Beloved. In Bulleh Shah, the human lover often employs a rhetorical question and an exclamatory tone, rebuking the divine Beloved for the latter's supposed nonchalance and procrastination in reciprocating the former's love:

What use loving the one without heart!
 My eyes pour out tears.
 With an arrow stung in my bosom, he left
 Along with the soul, my body is bereft.
 There is no trusting the heartless...
 He promised to come but is to be seen nowhere.
 To keep his word he seldom cares.
 I was misled taking fancy to him.
 What a cheat of a trader I've to endure!¹²

The rebuke in the human lover's complaint against the divine Beloved has an implicit gesture of endearment, affection and tenderness; it sounds like a personal grudge against someone close to one's heart. There is a tacit sense of enjoyment in such an extravagant expression of the lover's emotion.

5.2 Significance of prudence verses foolishness

What is prudence to the worldly-wise is foolishness to the mystic. Bulleh Shah expresses his deep disgust for what is called 'wisdom' by worldly standards:

Says Bulleh, arriving at God's house,
 He asked our account.
 Rejecting the pandit and the priest,
 He approved the mentally unsound.¹³

The pandit and the priest have renounced their sincerity for ostentation and self-service. Even God would express his disgust for such swindlers and impostors. The

¹² *Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 69.

¹³ *Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 87.

mentally unsound would be better off than the calculative opportunist. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram aptly comment:

Prudence... is for the man of spirit the arithmetic of fools.
The prudent man believes in the figure 1, which, according
to him endows zero with value, while the man of faith
believes that it is zero which endows 1 with value. For He,
the man of faith says: astra castra, numen, lumen (i.e. the
stars are my camp and the God is my lamp).¹⁴

That is why, coincidentally and appropriately, the mathematician calls the numbers beginning with 'zero' as whole numbers and those beginning with number 'one' as natural numbers. It is natural to the human instinct at pragmatism and security to begin with number 'one', but the non- pragmatic mystic knows that zeroing down to nothingness opens the pathway to infinity.

Once human being sheds away the sham, the superficiality, the ostentation, and hypocrisy inherent in the meretricious world of materialism, he starts yearning for the spiritual font of his life. This results in an intense craving for the vision of the supreme Reality and an ultimate union with Him. Shah Latif in the thirteenth bait of "Sasui: Kohiyari XVII" ("The Mountain Path") expresses the need for the pre-requisite process of inner cleansing:

O see, the cloth is laid
In soda-wash, and clean is made
Ere colours it receives.¹⁵

Here, Latif expresses the importance of unburdening the mind and body of the adscititious excrescences of worldly, materialistic as well as psychological baggage of biases, prejudices, egotism and self- centered centripetal consciousness. Once, this is done, Bulleh Shah writes:

What a spark of knowledge is kindled
I find, I am neither Hindu nor Turk.
I am a lover by creed.

¹⁴ *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Ed. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram. Vol 2. 2003. p 189.

¹⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 128.

A lover is victorious even when swindled.¹⁶

I have learnt a secret,

A secret I have learnt.

He is the same

From this end to that.

It's only we

Who fuss like a brat.¹⁷

Dismantling the fatuous Hindu- Muslim dichotomy is necessary for reaching the Supreme Being. This is also one of the veils to be lifted in order to overcome ignorance. This 'gyaan' is not worldly wisdom. It is the placid state of knowing the essence of the Supreme Beloved and attaining oneness with him. This enlightened state can be attained with a small spark capacitated to kindle and enlighten human life. Hence, Bulleh Shah emphasizes the promising nature of 'Ishaq', the domain of which is distinct from both pedanticism and scriptural wisdom as well as different from a state of folly. Bulleh Shah's 'ishaq' resides in single-minded dedication towards and soulful desire for the divine Being. Pedanticism, dogmaticism, and hair-splitting scholasticism becomes the same as a relapse into foolishness. The one who is truly in love with God remains silent and nurtures the vision of the divine Beloved in the silence of his heart:

Says Bulleh, the lover lives in a peculiar state

He is intoxicated with love.

The stupid are misled,

¹⁶ Sain Bulleh Shah. *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 223.
The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

, d k t f x ; k K k u i y h r k A
u k g e f g l n w u k r p d t : j h]
u k b ' k d n h g s e u t i j h]
v k ' k d u s g f j t h r k A

(Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 94.)

¹⁷ Ibid. p 43.

His subtle music of silence is articulated.

What a spark of knowledge is kindled!¹⁸

Here, it is noticeable that Bulleh Shah stands apart from his exclusively Islamic descent. He disregards his allegiance towards a Muslim or a Hindu God. He does not harbour reservations about addressing the Supreme Being as 'Hari'. In his devaluation of iconic ritualistic religion, Bulleh Shah writes,

The pilgrims go to Mecca.

My Mecca is my lover Ranjha

I am crazy indeed.¹⁹

Keeping love above religion, Bulleh Shah becomes a rebel against official religion and through this insurrection establishes a more universal and humanitarian empire replete with love and joy in union with the Supreme Being. In this domain of love, the dichotomy between self and the other gets demolished:

I see him in every face;

And yet people notice him not

Here and there it's all his grace.²⁰

¹⁸ Sain Bulleh Shah. *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 223.

ca'yk vk'kd nh ckr U; kjh]
iæ okyhvk cMh djkh]
ej [k nh eRr , da ekjh]
okd l [ku pq dhrrA
, d k tfxvk Kku i yhrkA

(Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 94.)

¹⁹ Sain Bulleh Shah. *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 49.

ftr oYy ; kj mrs oYy dlvck]
Hkkos i Oky fdrkka plj]
uh es deyh vka

(Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 96.)

²⁰ Sain Bulleh Shah: *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 65.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

जाँ मैं रमज़ इशक दी पाई,
eṣṁ nrh ekj xokb]
vlnj ckgj gkbz l i Okb]
ftr oYy os [kka ; kjks ; kj

b'kd nh ufovla uoha cgkjA (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 97.)

Elsewhere, Bulleh Shah says:

Remove your veil, my dear, and let me have a glimpse of you,

Let me merge in you, blend in you.²¹

The lines can easily be understood in secular terms as an earthly seductive love relationship between a lover desiring the physical being of the beloved. But, Bulleh Shah's verse is grounded in mystical intonations and eliminates the interpretation of worldly lovers in his verse. The concept of '*ishq*' is, hence, central to the attainment of the divine Beloved in both Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif. In both the poets, the earthly seeker is a female, be she in the garb of Heer, Sohini or Sasui, and the divine Beloved is designated as the male counterpart of the folk tale, Ranjha, Sahar or Punhu. It is interesting to note a parallel with the 'sagun' bhakti strand of love relation between Radha and Krishna. Though, here, both Radha and Krishna are taken to be divine consorts who complement each other and are known to perform celestial dance. At the mystical plane, the dance-divine is a holy communion in which the identity of Radha and Krishna merges into an inseparable ethereal whole. The same gestural stance is transcribed into the bhakti tradition of 'raasleela', performed at various Krishna festivities, where a boy and a girl imitate the divine dance of Radha and Krishna in repeated and focused circular movements with the holding of hands. This divine performance has been described in the *Bhagwat Purana* and *The Geet Govinda*, where Krishna dances with Radha and her 'Sakhis'. It is actually understood as an esoteric mystical performance, where Radha and Krishna are manifestations of one supreme divine force, and the sakhis are also extensions of the divine entity of Radha and Krishna. The culmination of the dance in perfect circular accelerating movements ending in an equally perfectly poised stand-still posture is iconic of the 'Raasleela'. The gestural energy, balance and perfection bring to mind W.B. Yeats' lines in *Among School Children*:

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,

How can we know the dancer from the dance?²²

²¹ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996.p 101.

²² William Butler Yeats. "Among School Children". Web. 15 Feb 2019.
<www.poetryfoundation.org/43293/among.school.children>

In this perfect ecstatic union, Radha and Krishna also unify into a complete whole. The raasleela tradition is further extended to the male devotees, who, oblivious of their gendered male identity, dress up as Radha and sing and dance, beseeching and soliciting their divine lover, Krishna, to accept them in a holy communion. Hence, instead of the male lover and his female consort, there is an emergence of coalescence between Radha and Krishna, where one 'becomes' the other and each is incomplete without the other. In fact, Bulleh Shah also alludes to the mesmerizing flute of 'Kanha':

The flute of Kanha has smitten my heart.²³ (Translation mine)

5.3 Minimalism in Discursive Argumentation.

Shah Latif expresses the importance of 'Alif', the first letter of the alphabet, hence:

You only read the letter 'A'--
All other pages put aside--
Book-reading nothing will convey--
But your being purify.²⁴

Bulleh Shah says something to the same effect, when he says:

Just Alaf would do for you...
You have learnt the Quran without a teacher.
An impeccable accent is its feature...
Your mind, however, is a great wanderer.
Just Alaf would do for you.²⁵

²³ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 122.
 , g tks ejyh dkgu otkb] fny ejs um plv/ yxkb]

²⁴ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 41.

The Sindhi text in Devnagri script reads:

v[k: i < vfyi t k] ojd+ l Hkq fol kfj]

अंदरू तूँ उजारि, पना पढ़दे केतिरा।

vdjk{kj dk gh i < v k] l c i "B Hkqk nka vius vlrLry ea mtkyk

Hkj nka bl rjg illus i < f s jgks\

(Motilal Jotwani, ed., *Shah Latif ka Kavya*, trans. Manishakar

Dwivedi. 1969. p 66)

²⁵ Sain *Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 181.

Shah Abdul Latif was impressed by the works of Jalaludin Rumi. Rumi's teacher Shams Tabrizi had taught him the significance of Alif as the symbol of God. Farida Mailiki, in the book titled *Shams Tabrizi: Rumi ke Kamil Murshid* compiles the views of Shams Tabriz in Hindi, translated from the pharsee text *Makalate Shams Tabrizi*. Farida quotes Shams hence:

Of all the secrets, only the Alif [symbol of God] has
been revealed. Whatever the dervishes say boils down
to the description of this Alif. ²⁶ (Translation mine)

Farida further substantiates the ethic of simplicity at the core of the supreme entity as pronounced by Shams Tabriz and documented by his disciples:

Alas! You die trying to
Solve your problems.
You are born with a purpose
But you die a meaningless death.
Sitting on the sea-shore
You die of thirst.
You sit on a treasure
But die in poverty. ²⁷ (Translation mine)

Here, Shams Tabrizi points towards unnecessary complication and circumlocution, which springs out of excesses of interpretation and re-interpretation. The philosopher lays emphasis on 'Alif', the first letter of the alphabet. With a single-minded devotion to the Supreme Being, the seeker can make a teleological move towards that Supreme

²⁶ Farida Mailiki. *Shams Tabrizi: Rumi ke Kamil Murshid*. 2014. p 163.

²⁷ Ibid. p 164.

gk; ełfdya vi uh gy dıus dh
dłkf'k'k ea gh ej tkrsgks A
l a lxx l s rē gq gks i shk
fo; lxx ea yfdu ej tkrsgks
cBrs gks l ełnj ds fdukj
l; kl s yfdu l ks tkrsgks A
cBrs gks [kktks ds mli j]
xjhčkh ea yfdu ej tkrsgks A

finality, the divine source envisioned as godhead or the Beloved. Farida cites from *Makalat Shams Tabrizi* and warns against getting lost in a never-ending proliferation and multiplication of meanings:

The amphitheatre of words is so vast that assigning meaning to them delimits the space occupied by them. There is a meaning beyond the obvious and the commonplace. This real meaning circumscribes all other meanings within it, engulfs words and their sounds, so that no cryptic idioms are left behind.²⁸
(Translation mine.)

‘Real’ meaning incorporates all other myriad meanings inside itself. What Shams means by ‘Real’ meaning is a re-visitation to ‘Alif’, the first alphabet:

‘Alif’ propped out of the inner world of ‘meaning’, and whosoever understood this ‘Alif’ understood everything.²⁹

Here is the crux of Sufi paradigm. The book of God is to be read, not with the senses but, with the sterling heart full of unmitigated devotion and absolute submission to Him. Keats finds heard music sweet but for him unheard melody is sweeter. Latif says:

Unuttered is unknown...the uttered
Is never understood...behold,
Although it be as true as gold,
Humanity takes never note--³⁰

The ‘unuttered’ is worthy of attention. The ‘uttered’ is subject to obfuscation, confusion and unnecessary and unending elaboration. The ‘Sufis’ study only one thing:

²⁸ Farida Mailiki. *Shams Tabrizi: Rumi ke Kamil Murshid*. 2014. p 26.
Says Mailiki:

‘kCnka dk {ksk bruk fo'kky gSfd mUga vFkz nus l s og l hfer fn[kkbz nsk
g\$ vk\$ ml vFkz ds {ksk l s ijs Hkh , d vFkz gA ; g vl yh vFkz vl;
l Hkh vFkka dks vius vlnj l e/ yrk g\$ 'kCnka dks vk\$ mudh vkot+
dks fuxy trrk g\$ ftl l s dkbz Hkh egkojk ckdh ugha jg trrkA

²⁹ Ibid. p 26.

Mailiki remarks:

vFkz ds vlnj ds l d kj ea l s , d vfyiQ ckj vk; k] vk\$ ftl fd l h us
bl vfyiQ+ dks l e> fy; k] ml us l c dN l e> fy; k A

³⁰ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 41.

'silence'.³¹ They find only one chapter worth reading: "Beloved's lovely face."³² The empirical world perceived through the five senses is to be forgotten to arrive at the glimpse of the lord:

Listening to the flute on the river bank in the jungle
 I forgot myself.
 Wounded with the arrows of an unstruck melody
 I forgot the world.
 Longing to have a glimpse of Him
 I forgot everything else.³³

Bulleh Shah is also averse to accumulation and display of endless erudition. Getting trapped in endless bookish learning and argumentation, deliberation and disputation does not lead anywhere. It only leads to augmentation of conflicts and accentuates self-righteous complacency. Says Bulleh:

Enough of learning, my friend!
 To it there is never an end.³⁴

5.4 Value of Simplicity

Goswami Tulsi Das in his *ShriRamcharitmanas* says:

Simple-minded people attain me
 I dislike deceivers and swindlers.³⁵

And Latif says in "Sur Leela-XX":

³¹ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 42.

³² Ibid. p 42.

³³ *Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 241.

³⁴ *Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 55.
 bYela cl djha vls ; kjA T; ka [ksth um [ksth vxgj] bYe oh vMdel ijs i jjs--
 (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 111.)

³⁵ Goswami Tulsidas. *ShriRamcharitmanas*. Web. 2 January 2019. <http://bharatdiscovery.org/india/निर्मल_मन_जन_सो_मोहि_पावा.>

The Hindi version says:

fuejy eu tu l kskfg i kok
 ekgs diV Ny fNnz u Hkkoka

O God, let me not clever be,
 Clever ones sorrows see--
 Loved-one all favours did to me
 When I was simpleton.³⁶

Simplicity is a cherished virtue, so is freedom from all ostentation and vanity. Leela, of Leela-Chanesar fame, succumbed to the temptation of a jewel, a necklace and demeaned herself in the eyes of Chanesar:

By show she slipped... And by conceit
 She fell, shattered was she...³⁷
 I was in Chanesar's domain
 First lady, and at social feasts
 First was I called, and always first,
 Until my heart grew vain;
 He thrust me off...with shame and pain
 Now lowest am I in the land.³⁸

In Bulleh Shah's mystical framework simplicity has two aspects: one, relinquishing the ego; two, relinquishing the trash of bookish cleverness. Says Bulleh Shah:

Ever since I've fallen in love
 I am left with not a trace of ego.³⁹

Another concomitant of simplicity of the heart is lack of pride and conceit in a sincere devotee:

The office you are proud of
 Is not going to go with you.

³⁶ *Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 142.
 The Punjai version in Devnagri reads:

i l .k dkj f.k fi jha/ t3 l gl a dfu l hækj]
 <ksyq ruha ts <kj] gBkfg; n gyfu ta
 nf; r dks ns[kus ds fy, l dMla fl ækj djrh gā ij fiz muds gh ikl
 gkrs gā tks uez gā (p 213.)

³⁷ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 141.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p 141

³⁹ *Sain Bulleh Shah*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. p106.

You are cruel,
 You harass people,
 Exploiting others is the way with you.⁴⁰

But Bulleh admonishes not to forget that “your destination is the city of silence/ where the God of Death ferries not a few”.⁴¹ Bulleh Shah further qualifies his assertion with the following assurance:

You may shout as much as you like
 But there alone [in the city of silence] you will find
 your way.
 And find Bulleh waiting for you.

Hence, union with the divine Beloved is reserved for the simple and the unpretentious. This is Bulleh Shah’s as much as Shah Latif’s promise to the sincere seeker.

5.5 Value of silence

Bulleh Shah foregrounds the value of silence. Premium is put on less of argumentation and minimalist indulgence in scriptural exegesis. Emphasis is on silent meditation on the quintessence of God, introspection and dedication in ones love for the divine Being. God is neither to be found in Hindu ‘teerath’, nor in Muslim ‘Mecca’. His existence transcends empirical reality. Worldly wisdom turns out to be predicated upon human formations, formulizations, human understanding and human convenience. The divine presene is to be sought in the realm of intuition and tacit oneness with the Supreme Being. The path shown by Bulleh is ‘Ishq’, or love. Says Bulleh Shah in his kafi beginning “*chupp karke karin guzaare nuun*”:

Better be quiet!
 The truth nobody tolerates.
 Tell the truth and they should swear.
 They sit not near the truthful.
 Truth is sweet only to the lover dear.
 He who has enjoyed the scent of truth,

⁴⁰ *Sain Bulleh Shah*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. p 71.

⁴¹ *Ibid*. p 71.

He who has enjoyed the chord of union,
 He would quit the world, false, and uncouth.
 Better be quiet.⁴²

Certain stages of connection with God can be understood and felt only by a true lover. God is the lover of truth and conversely, a true lover of God can attain truth. But to the common man's sensibility, truth is not acceptable. That is why truth should be shared with a select few. Shah Abdul Latif reinforces a similar sentiment through his employment of the analogy of the potter's kiln:

O hide your love, as potters do
 That cover up the kiln--
 Free fire can not bake a pot,
 The potter's ways pursue;
 As potters do with the kiln, so you
 Must never uncover fire.⁴³

⁴² Sain Bulleh Shah. *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 201.

चुप्प करके करी गुजारे नूँ

I Pp I qk oñ ykcl uk I fglñs uh]

I Pp vkD [kh, rka xy i ðñs uh]

fi Qj I Pps i kl uk c fglñs uh]

I Pp feVBk vk'kd I; kjs uñ

चुप्प करके करी गुजारे नूँ⁴²

I p dgrs gh I c vñj vx&l h yx tkrh gñ bl fy, I e>nkj dks pñ
 djds xqñkj djuk pñfg; ð i jlrq vkf'kd ds fy, pñ djuk dfBu gñrk
 gñ og iñ dh xgñkbz ea Mñdj tku yrñ gñ fd 'kjhvr vñj rñhñr
 dh ckrñ rñs mñfyh gñ I qñ&l qñkbz ; k nñgñkbz gñpñ tñfd pñfñs in] ; kuh
 gñhñr dh ckrñ iñ djus okyñ ds fy, I gt gñ nñu; k dñs yrñ gñ
 fd , ð k vñneh 'kjhvr vñj rñhñr ds deðkññ; vey I s gñkj
 gñrk ; k pñdk gñrk vñneh gñ ; g ckr I e>uh eñ' dy gñ bl fy, pñ
 करके गुजारा करने में बुद्धिमानी है। (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay
 aur Path*. 2012. p 117.)

⁴³ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 74. The Sindhi version reads:

नीहं निहाईअ जिअ, ढकियो कोहु न ढकिएँ

tj tñs NMñ] r jN i pñk fdvñ

तू पुणि करेजि तिअँ, जिअँ कुंभार करिनि कम सें।

vkos dh rñg <ds gñ ug dk <drs D; kñ ughñ ; fn vx us m". krk NñM+
 nh] rñs ik-k dñs i dñsñ nñ Hñh , ð k gh fd; k dñs tñs dñgñj vius
 dk; &dyki I s djrk gñ (Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*,
 trans. Manishakar Dwivedi. 1969. p 211.)

Hiding one's love for the divine Beloved has dual connotations: it is necessary to avoid proclamation and ostentation of one's love for the divine Beloved and this silent nurturing of one's love for the divine beloved will fortify and strengthen human love just like the potter's unbaked pot gets baked and strengthened in the covered kiln. It is also necessary for one familiar with truth and with the true love of God to evade scoffers and those who disdain the real meaning of love for God. Here we connect with the songs of the saints of India with their emphasis on a quietist, placid aura of receptivity of the mystical effusions of the "Siddhas, Pirs, Gods, Naths" and the music of the spheres. Guru Nanak's poem "Omkar" deserves citation:

From listening,
Siddhas, Pirs, Gods, Naths--
The spiritually adept;
From listening,
The earth, its white foundation,
And the sky;
From listening,
continents, worlds, hells;
From listening ,
Death can not approach.
Nanak says,
those who hear
flower forever.⁴⁴

Here, listening entails patience, forbearance, self-control, receptivity and increased sensitivity towards the intuitive and the mystical font of life. Sasui, the earthly lover, in Latif's "Sasui: Abri" is admonished thus in stanza 14:

Kechis are speaking- now Sasui
You should become an ear;
The breath that comes from them,
but silence can distinguish here;

⁴⁴ John Stratton Hawley and Mark Jurensmeier. *Songs of the Saints of India*. 2004. p 79.

Sit silently, and only 'hear',
that fire you may acquire.⁴⁵

Sasui is advised to be all ears. Absolute concentration and focused dedication of Sasui is required. Silence on the part of the seeker capacitates him to concentrate less on speaking and more on listening. It is a step towards self-effacement and annihilation of the 'ego' as well as a step towards dispensing off the seeker's identity as disparate from the sought. The siddhas, pirs and yogis have attempted union with the Supreme Being through diligent evacuation of the mind of worldly thoughts and self-centered consciousness. Their hearts have sought union with the divine being through openness and receptivity of the divine signs.

5.6 Symbolism in the poetry of Bulleh Shah and Shah Abdul Latif.

Human beings have an urge and a tendency to analyse empirical experiences and to symbolically articulate them for wider understanding. Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, explains the essential semiotic nature of culture; how people tend to express their ideas through classification of experiences, and produced semiotically, symbols become the collective collaborative psychological property of a group of people. This gives rise to culture. Geertz argues that to interpret a culture's web of symbols, scholars must first isolate its elements, specifying the internal relationships among those elements and characterize the whole system in some general way according to the core symbols around which it is organized, the underlying structures of which it is a surface expression, or the ideological principles upon which it is based. It was his view that culture is public, just as meaning is, and systems of meanings are what produce culture, because they are the collective property of a particular people. Wittgenstein noted that we can not understand a

⁴⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 120. The Sindhi version in Devnagri reads:
 duq Fkh] dfp; [u d[N; k] d[Nq e] Fkh d[Nfu]
 इशारतूँ उनिजूँ, सुकूताँ सुजनि,
 वटौं वेही तनि, सुणु त सोजु पिराइयें।
 dku cu tk (: kus dku yxkdj l p)A ckyer (D; kfd) os ckyrs gā muds
 (vykdd) b'kjs 'kfr vks pdih l s gh l ps tkrs gā muds ikl cBdj l p
 rks nnz i k; xhA (nnz l sfny dk jkLrk feyrk g)A
 (Motilal Jotwani. Ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 139.)

culture if “we cannot find our feet with them.”⁴⁶ No doubt, an alien culture can be understood only by overcoming one's insular, centripetal consciousness and adopting a centrifugal consciousness. This concept of developing a universal consciousness was definitely central to the poetry of the two poets under consideration. Kartar Singh Duggal aptly points out in the preface to his English translation of Bulleh Shah, only those poets sustained and survived the tide of time that overcame the insularity and ethnocentrism of Hindu-Muslim dichotomy and rose above petty schismatic sectarian confines. Hence, Sufi poetry was itself, necessarily, an attempt at finding its feet with the rest of humanity. Conversely, in the twenty first century, an attempt at finding our feet with the Sufi poets of Sindh and Punjab, their culture, discursive modalities, philosophical ideas and the symbols deployed for connecting with the rest of humanity is a tribute to and eulogy for the humanitarian instinct embedded in these poets. It can go a long way in the dissemination and assimilation of Sufi paradigm.

Dr S. M. Jhangiani aptly cites Dr. Annemarie Schimmel,

Mystics and poets do not live in a vacuum, but they are bound to their environment and have to use symbols ... which can be understood by their countrymen and contemporaries though these words bear, for the mystic, a deeper spiritual significance.⁴⁷

Hence, Geertz's collective collaborative psychological repertoire of a certain people is akin to Annemarie's common set of symbols understood by their countrymen. These symbols are interfused with spiritual connotations by saint-poets like Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah. Both the poets find similarity in assuming a non-insular, eclectic and all-embracing view of life. Latif adopts his symbols from the world of nature, Sindhi folk tales, the teachings of Christ, and Prophet Muhammad, which are already inscribed in the common knowledge of the masses, and transpires them with mystical connotations. In doing so, Shah strikes a mellifluous chord with his interpolators.

⁴⁶ Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. 1973. p 13.

⁴⁷ S.M. Jhanginani Shah Abdul Latif and his Times. 1989. p 18

A.K.Brohi in his introduction to Elsa Kazi's translation of Shah Latif's *Risalo* remarks:

Poetry of Latif is fundamentally allegorical in that he resorts to the vernacular of visible symbols in order to draw man's attention to the world of the invisible.⁴⁸

Brohi draws attention to Latif's own comment that his verses are "the Ayats or signs" which have the tendency to draw the listeners' attention towards the infinite spring of our lives, which he fondly visualizes as the divine Beloved. Symbols, myths and folknarratives have a greater efficacy in driving home the otherwise esoteric mystical truths about human identity and human existence because they form the well-accepted deeply ingrained psychological matrix of a particular group of people. Brohi further reminds us of Plato's allegory of the cave and explains how the mind gets enured to the habitual, normative and shadowy appearances, incapacitated (being bound hand and foot) to see the world of forms which alone are real.

What Thomas Carlyle says about symbolism seems to be spoken for the mystical enunciations of Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah:

In the Symbol proper, what we can call a Symbol, there is ever, more or less distinctly and directly, some embodiment and revelation of the Infinite; the Infinite is made to blend itself with the Finite, to stand visible, and as it were, attainable there. By Symbols, accordingly, is man guided and commanded, made happy, made wretched: He everywhere finds himself encompassed with Symbols, recognized as such or not recognized: the Universe is but one vast Symbol of God; nay if thou wilt have it, what is man himself but a Symbol of God; is not all that he does symbolical?⁴⁹

Carlyle, however, discusses symbol as having an intrinsic value and an extrinsic value. Quite often a symbol has only extrinsic meaning. Here is Carlyle's description of the role played by the intrinsic meaning of symbolism:

Another matter it is, however, when symbol has intrinsic meaning and is of itself fit that men would

⁴⁸ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 12.

⁴⁹ Thomas Carlyle. *Sartor Resartus*. Web. 11 September, 2018. <<http://www.online-literature.com/thomas-carlyle/sartor-resartus/24/>>

unite around it. Let but the godlike manifest itself to sense; let but eternity more or less visibly through the time-figure (Zeitbild)...⁵⁰

Obscure as the description seems, it brings us close to a clear understanding of the value of symbolism deployed by the Sufi poets under consideration. Carlyle's explanation of 'zeitbild' or the time-figure applies to Latif as well as Bulleh Shah. It refers to the perenniality of those symbols pointing to a transcendent certainty. Under the impact of these symbols,

...men unite there; and worship together before such Symbol; and so from day to day, and from age to age, superadd to it new divineness.⁵¹

In Latif's poetry the much desired rain becomes a symbol of the harbinger of divine benediction on the soil of Sindh. The world of nature, the human expectation for the beneficial rain, the seeker's intense desire for union with God, the farmers at their yolk, people feeling joyous at the advent of the rainy season, all merge into a happy conglomerate of peace and harmony: a happy union among the world of nature, the world of man and the divine realm. One seems to flow into the other. The euphoria would culminate into tranquility, quenching the thirst of the human devotee, leading to his merger into the divine Beloved. Says Latif's "Sur Sarang":

Season's orchestra's in full swing,

Rain-quails pipe tenderly;
peasants repair their ploughs, herdsmen
rejoice with ecstasy--
my friend in perfect form..O see
predicts a downpour great!⁵²

⁵⁰ Thomas Carlyle. *Sartor Resartus*. Web. 11 September, 2018. <<http://www.online-literature.com/thomas-carlyle/sartor-resartus/24/>>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 96.

enFkh eMy eM; k] rKM dh rok]]
gkfj; fu gj l ckfg; k] l jgk fFk; k l a/kj]
vtqe gats; kj ol .k tk od d; ka⁵²
ek e vk; k g l kjk xxu e[kfjr gks mBk g ek eh i {kh rKM dh
तिलमिलाहट के स्वर सुनाई देते हैं। किसानों ने हल सँभाले हैं। लोग सरस और
l jfhkr gq g vkt ejs fe=k us cjl us dh r\$ kjh dh g (Jotwani, Motilal,
ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969, p 119.)

The rain in its literal as well as figurative sense becomes symptomatic of happiness and prosperity and a symbol of redemption from all pain and suffering. With the coming of rain, the wait gets over. The rain referred to in "Sur Sarang" is the literal rain, a sign of divine benediction on earthly denizens. It is also a figurative rain which drenches the inmost self of a true mystic and quenches the inner thirst for proximity and union with the divine beloved:

Though inside all is overcast,
outside from every cloud is free...
Lightnings mature within, in
Love doth reside eternally...
Their eyes shall never rainless be
In whom thought of 'Beloved' reigns.⁵³

The landscape of Sindh does not get enough rain. Hence, there is immense relevance of the scanty rain which showers over the land of Sindh. Literal rain is always welcome here; though the figurative rain of divine benediction quenches the longing of a soul hankering after the vision of and union with the divine Beloved. This plane of interiority is always given greater prominence in Sufi paradigm.

"Sur Suriraag" takes the vocation of the Sindhi businessman on to the plane of symbolism as the means of mystical attainment of the Supreme Being. Admonishes Latif: "Acquire you such merchandise/ which time corrupteth not".⁵⁴ What is 'such merchandise'?

Those who with merchandise of truth
A lasting bargain made;
"you will get your reward", to them
These tidings are conveyed
Those were they whom the powers led

⁵³ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 98.

vnfj >f/q >fj ogj cgfj dd: u dkb]

ol kbllnh fotf/h] gqic tuha[ls [gkb]

लालनु जीनं लोइ, तनि ओकाणीनि न अखियूँ।

vlnj ?kvk f?kjh gblz gS vqj o"kkz gks jgh gA clgj dkbz cknv ugha gA

ftlsie gS (ml h ds fy,) fctyh cjl k; xhA ftudh l ktu ls ykSyxh

है, उनकी आँखें कभी वर्षा बन्द नहीं करतीं। (Jotwani, Motilal, ed. Shah

Latif ka Kavya. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. pp 119-120.)

⁵⁴ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 99.

Though mighty ocean's swell.⁵⁵

The Sindhi trader is admonished to carry on his vocation "with precious ware of 'service great'"⁵⁶, with "restraint from sin and evil"⁵⁷, to pass the adverse currents with "'Reliance absolute'" ⁵⁸. The reward for such a virtue-laden businessman would be:

By 'Perfect Sailor' met were they
In mid current, as guide!⁵⁹

Nature occupies a prominent place in the employment of symbolism in both Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif. Having a deep sense of connection with the world of nature, Bulleh Shah, who feels grounded in the agrarian economy of Punjab, uses the symbol of the 'earth' as epitomizing the grand truths of human existence:

The earth works miracles.
Dressed in earth, the earthly rider
Sits on a horse of earth;
The earth makes the earth run
And the earth takes an earthly turn.
Charging with the weapon of earth,
He who is more earthly
Prides on his earthly girth.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p100.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p 101

⁵⁷ Ibid. p 101.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p 100.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p 100.

⁶⁰ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 81.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

ekVh dpe djbh ; kj
ekVh tdk ekVh ?MA
ekVh nk vol kj
ekVh ekVh un nkd,]
ekVh nk vMedj
ekVh dpe djbh ; kJkVh ekVh un ekju yXxh]
ekVh ns gfFvkj ftl ekVh ij cgrh ekVh]
frl ekVh gdkj ekVh dpe djbh ; kJA⁶⁰
feVh gh l kjs [ky djrh g]
feVh oL-k g\$ feVh ?MA g\$ feVh ml ij l okj gA--

(Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 181)

Earth becomes reminiscent of the need to remember our quintessential connection with earth and of the indispensable fact of human mortality. Human being is made out of the earth, Earth becomes symbolic of the fabric of human existence.

Bulleh Shah lays emphasis on right action ‘Karmavada’. In doing so, he uses the symbol of the spinning wheel and its break-down. Bulleh Shah stands tall as a potent figure belonging to Indian Sufi poets, who re-define and re-establish the road to self-realization via a path akin to Indian Vedantic thought and the Natha-yogic path but does so by bringing the sublime prescriptions of Vedantic and the Natha yogic traditions down to the plane of folk-lore of Punjab. The point can be overtly substantiated by Bulleh Shah’s enunciation:

This courtyard has nine doors,
the tenth door is hidden.
A spinning wheel is kept in the courtyard,
on whose leeseid there is a window.⁶¹ (Translation mine)

Bulleh Shah uses the symbol of ‘Charkha’ to bring forth in the importance of human action, ‘karmavada’. Human being desirous of release from worldly fetters practices tough rounds of renunciation and meditation. The purpose is to raise the doer above his ‘nafs’, worldly pleasures and desires. Working on the charkha with focus and diligence would lead a sincere practitioner to the break-down of the charkha itself. The symbolism of the Charkha presents a peculiar case of metamorphosis in the poet’s conception of the symbol as per the poet’s state of mind and evolution in the mystical thought process. Allying the charkha with the cultural more of the Punjab, where the girl sews and stitches, embroiders and spins on the charkha, prior to her marriage to prepare her dowry, so that she is well prepared to impress the in-laws.

⁶¹ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 88.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

bl ogMs-ns ukS njoktj
nl oka xqr j [kk rh
bl ogMs-fop pj [kk jgmk
vkgys ns fop rkdhA
bl vlaxu ds ukS njokts g] tcf d nl oka njoktk xqr j [kk x; k gA bl vlaxu
ea pj [kk jgrk gS vks vks/ ea , d f [kMedh gA

Similarly, the human seeker on the mystical path is supposed to spin the charkha diligently with the ethos of sincere ‘karmavada’ or right action. Good deeds become analogous to the new brides dowry to her marital home. Implores Bulleh:

Living with parents is just four days,
 You must not squander in foolish play.
 Waste not time, you must work,
 You’ll come to grief if work you shirk.
 Attend to your spinning maid!⁶²

There is a turn of thought when Bulleh Shah remarks:

Sisters! I am sick of spinning.
 My basket and my seat are left behind.
 I have just a bit of cotton in my hand.
 The spinning wheel in front and the seat behind
 The drawing string in my fingers is snapped....⁶³

Further Bulleh Shah says that it is good that the spinning wheel has broken. The

⁶² Sain Bulleh Shah: *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p171. The Punjabi version in Devnagri reads:

तू सुत्तिआं उमर वंजाई ए,
 rŋ pj [ks rŋn uk i kbz ,]
 dh djl & nkt l; kj ughj
 mVB ttx ?kjkm+ekj ugha (Shahi. p 175.)

⁶³ Ibid. p111. The Punjabi version in Devnagri reads:

भैणां मैं कत्तदी कत्तदी gŋ/vhA
 i hgMh fi PNs fi NokM+ jfg x; h]
 gRFk foPp jfg x; h tŋ/vh]
 vXxs pj [kk fi PNs i hgMh]
 ejs gRFkka rŋn r: VhA
 भैणां मैं कत्तदी कत्तदी हुट्टी।
 nkt tokg v l ka dh djuk]
 ft l i e dVokbz eŋ/BhA⁶³
 cgul! eŋ dkrh & dkrh Fkd x; hA
 tokgja okys nkt&ntg dls cukdj eŋs D; k i Ok; nk] ft l s cukr&cukrs
 ejs gkFk Vŋ x, A (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012.
 p 191.)

splintering of the ‘charkha’ is symbolic of the release from worldly anxieties, dilemmas, doubts and strivings.

Good my wheel broke,
Now my life has become tussle-free.⁶⁴ (Translation mine)

The charkha of human striving does not break in the case of an ordinary human being or an amateur seeker after the divine Beloved. It happens to a Sufi or a Heer after harsh strivings to attain the Beloved. In Bulleh Shah’s hands, Charkha becomes an instrument of human activity, where he is the doer, the actor and human ‘karma’ is predominant. The human seeker learns to progress from world-weary activities and “the fever and the fret” of John Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale”⁶⁵ to renunciation of worldly desires and striving for remembrance and union with God. But he remains entangled in these strivings till the time the Charkha or the circle of human action and human illusion that he is the doer, breaks down. Bulleh Shah’s kafi “jaat ishaq di kaudn” explains the point:

I know not what sort of love is mine.
I know not what sort of love is mine.
I can neither rest nor do my work,
My sleep is lost in counting chimes.⁶⁶

Here, Bulleh Shah expresses the acme of Sufi realization. Wallowing deep in the ‘*ishaq*’ of the supreme Beloved, the human lover expresses the redundancy of fretful human activity like spinning and weaving. Further, there is no need of going to the forest since the non-dualistic (‘advaitic’) state makes the Beloved one with the human lover. The illusion of human being as the doer and the actor breaks down in the

⁶⁴ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 191. The Punjabi version in Devnagri reads:

paak gls k ejk pj [kk V/Vk
ejh ftan vtckcs N/Vh⁶⁴
vPNk gpk ejk pj [kk V/V x; k] ejh ftanxh d"Vla ls NW x; hA gls l ds rls
ejsh ml plj dks idM+ykvj ftl dh otg l sejh ftanxh ; ka rckg gpa

⁶⁵ John Keats. “Ode to a Nightingale”. Web. 15 Feb 2019. <www.poetryfoundation.org/poems>

⁶⁶ Bulleh Shah. *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 253.

cyk dh tk.kj tkr b'kd nh dksA
ना सूहां ना कम्म बखेदे, बंजे जागण सौण⁶⁶
cyk D; k tkuj b'd dh tkr dksA l h gA
u ogla l jix ykus dks dñ g u dkrus dk tatkyA ogla ris tkxuk vj l kuk Hh NW tkrk gA (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. Haryana: Aadhar Prakashan, 2012. p 120)

condition of realization of non-dualism and persistent proximity with the divine Beloved. Love does not have a caste. Wallowing in the ocean of love with the divine Being, the sewing needle, the spinning and the weaving and even the acts of sleeping and waking, and all the fretful seeking after a far-fetched reality lose significance. The snapping of the 'charkha' finds a parallel in the snapping of the unbaked earthen pot in "Sur Sohini" of Shah Abdul Latif's *Risalo*. Once the external search with material support comes to a halt and the limitation of the material literal act of weaving is realized, the tenth door of Bulleh Shah opens to a new consciousness through an introspective turn, shorn of worldly succour and support. At this moment, the seeker looks inside to search for the path leading to the Beloved. Indubitably, there is a new discovery. He finds a tenth secret door and a window opens to union with the divine Beloved. Vinod Shahi comments:

Bulleh Shah's speciality is that he brings his fundamental contemplative-meditative modality so close to human sensibility that it is not difficult to understand it.⁶⁷ (Translation mine)

This is the method followed by Indian Sufi poets like Bulleh Shah as well as Shah Abdul Latif. They bring forth a spontaneous amalgamation of Indian mystical philosophy and Sufi thought on the native Indian Soil of Punjab and Sindh:

They nourish the possibility of emancipation like a sapling on the land of Bharat and then invite others to nestle themselves in this plant, nurtured and nourished with love: the pirs of central Asia and the yusuf- zuleikhas therefrom. Camouflaging the hope of sublime cultural transformation of entire Asia, this tree of ultimate coalescence will never die- being the result of efforts of these Indian Sufis.⁶⁸ (Translation mine)

⁶⁷ Bulleh Shah. *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 88.

cā'ys 'kig dh [kkf] ; r ; gka bl ckr ea Hkh gS fd os bl ekfyd
fpru&euu oī fodkl oīe dkj ykcdFkkvka oī l i 'kz l s bruk vkReh;
cuk yrs gS fd mlga l e>us ea dkbz dfBukbz egl il ugha gkshA

⁶⁸ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 89-90.

os efDr dh l Hkkoukvka dks Hkkjr dh tehu ea jks x; s , d i kS/s dh
rjg l hprs gS vjg fiOj ml i kS/s ea mrjdj ?kk yk cuk yus oī fy,
न्यौता देते हैं। सुदूर मध्य एशियाई पीरों-पैगम्बरों को और वहां के
यूसुफों-जुलेखाओ को। पूरे एशिया के महान सांस्कृतिक रूपांतर के भविष्य
dh mEehnk dks [kp ea fNik; s ; g egkl ello; dk iM+dHkh ejxk ugha &
bu egku Hkkjrh; l i i O; ka dh cyfin; ka dh mit gkus dh otg l A

Break down of dichotomies is central to an understanding of the mystical frame-work of both Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah. Bulleh shah and Shah Abdul Latif belong to that cadre of Sufis who out-grow and out-do all categorization or classification vis-a-vis their thoughts and their poetic idioms. Bulleh Shah says in his famous kafi “mai baikaid”:

I am emancipated, emancipated I am.
 I am emancipated, emancipated I am.
 I am neither a patient nor a physician.
 Neither a believer nor a non-believer.
 I am no prisoner of being born a Syed.
 All the fourteen heavens are my territory.
 I am a slave of none.
 A liberated creature,
 I am above good and evil.
 Why ask for Bulleh’s caste?
 No mortal, he was not even born.
 I am emancipated, emancipated I am.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 159. The Punjai version in Devnagri reads:

es c&dñ] es c&dñ]
 uk jlxh uk oñA
 uk es ekeu uk es dki Qj]
 uk eYyk uk I ñA
 plñgha rcdha I j vl kmk]
 fdr u gkoka dñ
 [kkjckr ea tkr vl kmk]
 uk 'kkkk uk ,cA
 cYyk I gq nh tkr iñNu\$
 iñk djs uiñA
 es fy, dkbz dñ ugha
 क्योंकि मैं न रोगी हूँ, न वैद्या।
 u es ekeu gñ uk dki Qj]
 u es eYyk gñ u I ñ
 plñs vñl eku rd I j dñs fudyryk gñ
 dgha dñ ugha gñrñA (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012.
 p 119)

Ian Almond's book, *The Deconstructive Turn: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn Arabi*, is an interesting reading which brings forth the need and significance of casting a fresh glance at Sufi thought and Sufi poetry. In the contemporary modernist and the so-called post-modernist Derridean view, we find interesting points of comparison between Sufi paradigm and the deconstructive modality. In the introduction to the book, Ian Almond presents an emancipatory project as common to both Derrida and Ibn Arabi. Further, there is an unearthing of the similarity between Derrida and Sufi thought in that both seem to dismantle all assumptions and all accepted givens. Both work by thwarting established and complacent patterns of deciphering meanings in an attempt to arrive at the actual, the quintessential, the real meaning of a text or the answer to a quest. Similarity also lies in resisting restrictive, limited, reductive interpretations and possibilities and rather opening up the vast possibilities of meanings and entering the realm of infinity. Sufi dismantling of human identity assigned to him by convention finds a parallel in Derridean dissolution of all givens and all fixities in unearthing the meaning of a text. Hence, the age-old, time-honored Sufi thought finds an affirmative parallel in the twentieth century Derridean philosophy. In the fourth section called "Mystery Tasting and Abyssality", Ian Almond comments:

As Derrida might say: the secret of the self is that there is no self. Until we are enlightened we are rooted in something we remain fundamentally ignorant of. How far this Sufi dismantling of selfhood is comparable to the deconstructive laying bare of the autos is a difficult question. Derrida certainly does not reveal the groundlessness of identities in order to have them re-incorporated into something bigger transcendental presence; on the other hand neither does Ibn 'Arabi.⁷⁰

Ian Almond remarks that when Ibn Arabi talks of dissolution of the self into a larger Reality, the "Real is not an entity in any onto-theological sense". This is because the so called 'Real' with a capital 'R' is not a well-defined "corpus":

It is a formless, nameless, faceless force, moving through the universe constantly renewing it.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ian Almond. *The Deconstructive Turn: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn Arabi*. p 103.

⁷¹ Ibid.p 103.

What Ian Almond talks about Ibn Arabi may well vouch for Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif. On the path to the attainment of the divine Beloved, two things happen: relinquishing all worldly and convention-bound parameters of understanding the relation between the self and the universe; gradual attainment of identification between the perceiver and the perceived, the seeker and the sought as well as abrogation of the intermittent gap between the two and a final nullification of all dichotomies and oppositions to merge into the unity of Being. Ian Almond remarks:

Learning the secret means discovering that one no longer has to do anything, because all notions of obligation are based on a relationship to the Other. 'Tasting' the mystery means becoming the mystery—the mystery of God, becoming as formless, faceless and attributeless as God himself.⁷²

Ian Almond further quotes Ibn Arabi's favourite citation from Abu Yazid al-Bastami:

It was said to Abu Yazid, 'How are you this morning?' he replied: 'I have no morning no evening; morning and evening belong to him who becomes limited by attributes (Sifa), and I have no attributes.'⁷³

Almond cites a parallel observation from Ibn Arabi. On reaching the 'station of light', Arabi said:

I no longer had back or front, and with this vision I no longer made any distinction between different directions, I was like a sphere.⁷⁴

Stumbling upon the secret in Ibn Arabi's modal is about understanding the utter arbitrariness of the self as distinct and disjunct from the rest of the world. The mystical secret leads to the dissolution of the difference between the self and the other, undermining the binary oppositions like East and West, right and wrong, good and bad. Bulleh Shah undercuts the dichotomy between good and bad, hence:

⁷² Ian Almond. *The Deconstructive Turn: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn Arabi* .p 104

⁷³ Ibid.p 104

⁷⁴ Ibid. p 104.

The love of Bulleh's Beloved is exceptional
He offers salvation even to the non-virtuous.⁷⁵ (Translation mine.)

And says Latif, in a parallel enunciation, in Sur "Barvo Sindhi":

My loved ones, all my blemishes ...
Weaknesses came to know;
They never did reproach me..nay,
Nor did they anger show...⁷⁶

Sufi poetry does not attest to worldly discourses and the binary opposites which govern quotidian human existence. In an attempt to make palpable the divine realm, Sufi poets deconstruct the normative materialistic thought processes and replace them with fresh modes of thinking and new standards of morality.

Shah Abdul Latif deconstructs the binaries in the *Risalo*, hence:

What feast is for the vulgar, know
Sweet hunger that for yogi is;
They love to keep the fast and go
Ne'er near where feasts they see.⁷⁷

Fasting and feasting are no more binary opposites of each other. It is a matter of perspective and point of view. What is hunger for the layman is a cherished state, equivalent to feasting, for a yogi.

5.7 Strong Women Protagonists

In Shah Latif's and Bulleh Shah's worldview, the earthly lover protagonists are strong-willed women. They exhibit unflinching courage and indomitable spirit in the face of insuperable circumstances. Dr Kiranjeet Sethi in an article, "The Space of

⁷⁵ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 170. The Punjabi version reads:

ਚਯਕ ਿ ਗਾ ਨਹਿ ਿ ਹਰ ਵੁਕਸ[ਕਹ]
ਰਕਿਸ ਵਮਖਗਕਿਸ ਿ
ਚਯਕ ਿ ਿ ਕਗ (ਫਿ:ਰੇ) ਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ
ਿ: ਕਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ ਿ

⁷⁶ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 158.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p 75.

Woman in Sufi Poetry,”⁷⁸ explains how the expression of love of human being for the divine Beloved has undergone a process of evolution across space and time. She explains how Arabic Sufi poets like Ibn Arabi (1165-1240 AD) and Persian Sufi poets like Rumi (d. 1272), envision the divine Being as a woman and the human lover is a male. She cites Arabi’s “Oh her beauty- the tender maid” and “wild is she- none can make her his friend”. These poets present the image of the divine feminine as the acme of human contemplation. This positioning of woman as the object of divine contemplation was a bold step, keeping in mind the strict Islamic patriarchy which did not stop short of presenting woman as the devil itself.⁷⁹ Dr Sethi further traces the development in the mystical sentiment from the feminine images of the divine Godhead to Rumi’s reverence of woman as “the radiance of God” and as “the creator” to Amir Khurau’s celebration of the feminine divine in his poems “Nami Danam” and “ Khabram Raseed Imshab”. The status of the feminine figure is further traced to the Punjabi Sufi poets who invented a novel idiom of expression of love between the human and the divine realm, with the female seeker hankering for the divine Beloved, the female devotee dedicated towards a male lord. Dr Sethi posits two particular reasons as responsible for this change: (i) the feudal agrarian economy of Punjab, (ii) the spread of devotional Bhakti poetry. The female human lover belongs to a lower rung, in a posture of supplication and submission to the divine male Beloved. However, this framework stops short of being restricted to a chauvinistic male centred patriarchal mold. Instead, there is a concomitant centrality given to the earthly female seeker of the divine Beloved. This articulate female subjectivity, her vehemence, immediacy and efficacy of expression in her choice of poetic idiom of love and mystical sentiment makes her the female protagonist of the Sufi poets like Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif. Further, it is significant that in the Sufi idiom, the divine Beloved is neither apathetic nor nonchalant towards the earthly lover. Instead he reciprocates with equal love and mystical passion, so much so that Indian Sufism, as evinced in the poetry, for instance, of Bulleh Shah and Latif, evinces mutual inclination and desire for union between the human devotee and the divine Beloved:

⁷⁸ Kiranjeet Sethi. “The Space of Woman in Sufi Poetry.” *Sufism: The Road to Self-Realization*. 2018. pp 120-128.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p 122.

When a devotee seeks me devoutly, I also reciprocate
his love and become his ear by which he hears, his eye
by which he sees, his hands by which he works and his
feet by which he walks.⁸⁰

The female lover of the divine Beloved goes to the extent of saying:

Remembering Ranjha day and night
I've become Ranjha myself.
Call me Dhido Ranjha,
No more I be addressed as Heer.
I am in Ranjha and Ranjha is in me.⁸¹

Significantly, the entire Sufi philosophy finds a clear enunciation in the voice or the action of the female protagonist, the human lover seeking after the divine Beloved, caste in the frame of Sahar, or Ranjha, or Chanesar or Rano. She is the subject, the doer and the speaker. She is the point of articulation of the saint-poet's Sufi philosophy.

Latif's Leela of sur "Leela Chanesar" emerges as the vanquisher of worldly materialism and overcoming her strong attraction towards charismatic jewels, gains mystical sanctification in a moment of death in the arms of her Beloved Chanesar. The point is about abdication of worldly ties. The voice of divine Beloved is heard once worldly connections are renounced:

Neither she wears bangles nor a necklace. She doesnot
bedeck herself superficially. The lord accepts her in her

⁸⁰ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, ed. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 1. 2003. p 28.

⁸¹ Bulleh Shah. *The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 53.

The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

jka>k jka>k djnh uh eš
vki s jka>k gkbA
सहो नी मैंनुं धीदो रांझा,
ghj uk vk[kks dkbA

jka>k jka>k djrh gbl
eš [k jka>k gks x; h g
ep-s vc /hns jka>s ds uke l s cykvks
dkbz ghj u dgks (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 165.)

simplicity.⁸² (Translation mine)

Latif's female protagonist is fearless and undaunted by overweening circumstances. Not dissuaded by the strong current of the river or the steep mountaneous terrains, she is out to meet her Beloved. Says Latif in his Risalo:

Sasui reduces herself to a nought to attain the beloved.
But the truth is that not only the thirst seek water, water
also seeks the thirsty.⁸³ (Translation mine.)

In the process she may have to incur death, but her beloved, be it Punhun or Sahar, also chooses to undergo death of the physical self to unite with the human seeker on a mystical plane. The idea is very much in consonance with the Indian vedantic thought where the devotee and the deity both feel gravitated towards each other.

Further, the women protagonists of Sufi poets like Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah are not always perfect women, immune to erroneous conduct. Grounded in the folk-lore of Sindh, these women are humanized by the saint-poets. Nuri, in the folk-narrative of Nuri-Jam Tamachi may be the perfect women, the epitome of simplicity, inner beatitude, humility and perfection, but Latif's Leela and Moomal are ridden with human flaws. In the folk-narrative of Moomal-Rano, Moomal undergoes inner transformation. Latif makes her heroine transmogrified from a human being caught up in worldly desires and the repertoire of material existence to one who arrives at a stage of non-distinction between body and

⁸² Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 213
The Sindhi version in Devnagri script reads:

u dks gks ckqfM+ fu ej u dh x fj gq/kfe]
न मूँ सींधि, न सुरमो, न सींगारू कयोमि,
ry/kfg dka/q l nkfe] : [kkbz j b fxMA
न कुछ बाँहों में पहना और न कुछ गले में ही (आभूषण) था। न माँग
सँवारी थी, न श्रृंगार ही किया था। इसीलिए रमण ने रूखे में ही स्वीकृत
fd; kA

⁸³ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. pp 125-126.

साजन कारणि सुज, मरू कबूले ससुई,
vnfj जिनीं उज, पाणी उज्यो उनिखे⁸³
l l pZ l ktu ds fy, Hkys 'W; dks LohdkjA ftuds vnj l; kl jgrh gS
muds fy, ikuh Hkh fi i kfl r gh jgrk gA l Pps vkf'kdka ds fy, egcA
Hkh ykykf; r jgrk gA

mind. In a moment of inner revelation, she arrives at the realization of unity of all things. She stops seeing Rano as a separate distinct identity whom she desires. Instead she realizes the presence of Rano inside herself:

Where should I drive the camel?
All around is glory;
Kaak's palace is within me!⁸⁴

Latif makes his heroines the agent of inner-realization and revelation through an act of introspection. They become the epitomes and the spokespersons of Latif's mystical framework. Leela succumbs to worldly enticements and foregoes her beloved Chanesar in lieu of a sparkling necklace. Realizing the futility of material possessions and her foolishness in falling into the trap of worldly blandishments, Leela has the courage and the probity of setting right what has gone amiss. Her profound repentance and steadfastness towards her beloved Chanesar transforms Chanesar's heart. He accepts her again. Leela however dies a serene death in the arms of her Beloved Chanesar. Her headstrong desire to win back her beloved makes the moment of union larger than the fact of her death. In this sublime moment, Chanesar himself is so overwhelmed with emotion and grief, that he follows Leela and dies along with her. Similar moment of spiritual asceticism is attained by the sublime love of Sasui-Punhu. Sasui's giving herself up to death, in a moment of intense longing and suffering for her beloved Punhu, makes Punhu reciprocate her love by relinquishing his own life and, hence, gaining mystical union with Sasui. Bulleh Shah, too, envisions the divine Beloved as the Rajha figure. The human lover, in the garb of Heer is presented as a courageous figure undaunted by unfavourable circumstances. She rebukes, cajoles, appreciates, at times argues with her Beloved Ranjha, with the firm belief, "I am Ranjha, Ranjha is in me." It is the pristine love of Latif's women protagonists and their single-minded devotion towards the divine Beloved which makes the divine Beloved not just reciprocate their call, but also to blend and merge with them.

⁸⁴ Motilal Jotwani. Introduction. *Shah Abdul Latif: Seeking the Beloved*. Trans. Anju Makhija and Hari Dilgir. 2012. N.Pag.

5.8 The influence of yogis on both Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah.

In Bulleh Shah's kafi, "O fakirs! let us go to the fair / The call of the Arif beckons us."⁸⁵ (Translation mine), Bulleh Shah invites humanity to visit the fair ('mele'), where we encounter all kinds of people. Village fairs in India have been a site of a fine amalgam of entertainment, music, dance and colourful dresses; a place meant for coming out of daily quotidian rounds of restrictions and confinements. Bulleh Shah invests this place of folk entertainment with emancipatory possibility of listening to the music of the 'arif' (gnostic). Here, the poet sees a possibility of stepping up from the visible and mundane existence to the invisible and the hidden truth. There is a call of the music of the 'arif' from the fair. The 'anahad' music of the 'arif' will un-do the ochre colour of the saint. The cosmic music of the 'anahad naad' will divest human being of inner and external conflict and apprehension.

Bulleh deplores the superficialities glazed upon false appearances of swindlers in the garb of 'yogis'. Says Bulleh:

The ochre colour of the yogi being his own need.
Cotton has only one colour.⁸⁶

There are references to the historical interaction of Sufi saints and yogis in India. Dr T.R. Shangri in his introduction to *Kamil Darvesh Shah Latif*, refers to Latif's intense desire to spend time in forests in solitary hermetic manner away from the comforts

⁸⁵ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 118. The Sindhi version reads:

vkvks i 0dhjka eys pfy,]
vkji0 dk l qk oktk jA
vugn 'kCn l qkks cgjakh]
rth Hks[k l; ktk jA⁸⁵
vkfji0 dk cktk l qkbz ns jgk gA ; g i qdkj gA
vkvks i 0dhjka ml ds eys ea pyA ogka ml ckts ds cgjakh vulgr ukn
dks l qdkj l; kth jA dh os kHkwwk mrj x; h gA

⁸⁶ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 197 The Sindhi version reads:

bDdks jA di kbz nka
dikl dk , d gh jA gA (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 121.)

and discourses of commonplace life. At the age of sixteen, he relinquished domestic life and joined a group of yogis. Latif, like Bulleh Shah, was averse to attesting a staunch Muslim identity for himself and along with the yogis visited the Kali mandir situated at the present day city of Hyderabad in Pakistan and the holy abode of Hinglaj, situated in Baluchistan, the temple of goddess Hingula, Lord Shiva's divine consort in Hindu mythology. Shangri writes:

Latif was greatly influenced by the yogis during his itinerary with them. Shah Sahib was born in a Muslim family and he visited many Hindu pilgrimages along with the yogis. Latif's sensibility was never reductive; yogis further expanded his vision. Under the influence of the Yogis, Latif immensely respected and paid homage to other religions and their places of worship.⁸⁷ (Translation mine)

Latif describes the characteristics of the yogis in crisp and clear terms in "Sur Ramkali" yogis embrace worldly renunciation with gaiety:

O nothing with themselves they take,
with self they parted company-
And those in whom such traits I see,
"I can not live without them!"⁸⁸

⁸⁷ J.R. Puri and T.R. Shangri. *Sain Bulleh Shah*. 1985. p 27.
The Hindi version reads:

; kfx; ka ds l kfk fd, x, yrs Hke.k dk] gtjr 'kkg yrhi@ ds thou
vlg fpru ij xgjk i Hkko i MA 'kkg l kfgc dk tle eq yeku ifjokj ea
gprk Fkk vlg mlgkaus ; kfx; ka ds l kfk fgpr/ka ds vucl rhFKZ Fkkuka dh ; k-
dhA vki dh fopkj/kjk i gys Hkh l adh. kZ ugha Fkh] ; kfx; ka ds l kfk jgus l s
bl ea vlg vf/d fo'kkyrk vk xba vius ; kfx; ka dk osk /kj. k djds
muds l kfk bdVBs jgus vlg [kkus i hus ea dKBZ l adkp u fd; ka vki nll js
धर्मों और उनके पूजा-स्थलों का भी सम्मान करते थे।

⁸⁸ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 70.

u dh [k. kfu i k. k l q u dks l k. kfu i k. k
अहिदो जनि अहुआणु, जाऊँ न जिअदी उनि रे।
u fd l h dks l kfk yrs gā vlg u Lo; a dks gh l kfk j [krs gā , d s ftuds
लक्षण हैं (ऐसी जिनकी पहचान है), मैं उनके बिना न रहूँगी। (Motilal
Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi.
1969. p 204.)

Latif finds the world-view of the yogis entrancing, irresistibly beckoning him to join them. Writes Shangri regarding the central idea of the charisma that the yogis held for Latif as expressed in "Sur Ramkali":

My encounter with the yogi has made me alive once again. It is a rebirth. My soul is free of all pain. Yogi has shown the way to a blind and ignorant person. My proximity with the yogi's quintessential pure springs made my heart blossom like a lotus. I wish to remain lost eternally in the meditative reminiscence of the yogi. It is deplorable that the yogis have left me behind. These yogis are dacoits, they have usurped my heart. They have hypnotized me by sounding the 'singi'. These yogis are rogues. They have pillaged my heart. These yogis roam without food and clothes. I have received heavenly bliss from them.⁸⁹ (Translation mine)

Latif's point is about the imperative and inescapable appeal of the honesty and integrity, simplicity and impeccability, and intense sincerity of the yogis. Both Latif and Bulleh Shah evince a deep impression of the immaculate and the mesmerising aura of the yogis of their times.

5.9 Emphasis on right action

A firm believer in 'karma-yoga', Latif says:

Bestowal is not due to caste,
Whoever works obtains.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ J.R. Puri and T.R. Shangri. *Sain Bulleh Shah*. 1985. p 29.

मेरा योगी से मिलाप हो गया है। मैं फिर से ज़िंदा हो गया हूँ। मुझे नया जन्म
feyk gā ejh : g dk nīk nī gls x; k gS vīg ejh : gkuh deh i jh gls xbz gā
----- tc eūs ; lxxh ds okLrfod Lo: i dk nhnkj fd; k] rks ejk
हृदय-कँवल जो पहले बंद था, खिल गया। मैं चाहता हूँ कि मैं फिर से योगी का
सुमिरन शुरू कर दूँ और मन में उसके स्वरूप का ध्यान करूँ। दुःख की बात है
fd ; lxxh eps vdsyk NīMedj pys x, gā ; s dui vS ; lxxh Mīdch gā blghus
viuh xpmM l s ejk fny yw fy; k gā ; s ; lxxh u [klīj ea Hkstū j [krs gā
vīg u gh dī Mīgurs gā eps bul s gh : gkuh thou feyk gā

⁹⁰ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. P 168.

The Sindhi text in Devnagri script reads:

दाति ना आहे जाति ते, जो वहे सो लहे--

īfrHkk tkfr ij fuHkij ugha gā tks ifjJeh gā ogh i klr djrk gā

(Motilal Jotwani. ed., *Shah Latif ka Kavya*, trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 224)

"Sur Kapaitie" presents the sincere spinner as truly deserving divine acclaim:

She ne'er breaks thread, nor for rest pines
Who has realized the truth.⁹¹

The essential pre-requisite for hard work and right action is lack of pride in the doer's subjectivity:

Toil on and feel not proud, or else
Your lord offended be--
The wheel turn...
Round your neck hang scarf of sweet humility...⁹²
Bulleh Shah says:
We must proceed.
Watch the play and leave.
What a performance it was
At my Master's court!
The world came to see.⁹³

Earthly life is a brief sojourn. As Jaques remarks in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*:

⁹¹ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. 168.

tka drh rka drq ghiv gfm fcgk.kh]
dikbrh l Hckk] drs l ck.kh]
tkris tfu tk.kh] rfu gFka igh u NMhA
tc rd dkr l dkk dkr ykA ; g cyk chrh l e>kA dkrus okyh gj , d gA dkrss gh
'kkkk ik, xhA ftlus ; g tku fy; k gS mlus gkfk l s iuh u NMhA (Motilal
Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar
Dwivedi. 1969. p 221.)

⁹² Ibid. p 169.

सुदु उनीं जो सफ़िरो, जे परि में पिजईनि,
vkoktq vV tkk l kg u l q kkbzu]
fydk; kk yrhi p,] dffc; ks drkbzu]
ts ekfid ekvkbzu] rkb efgq eglaks mfutka
mudk gh l r l i dy gS tks vUnj&gh&vUnj dkrrih gS ftlls p[kk dh
vkokt+ 'okl rd l p u ik, A yrhi dgrs gS fNikd]] pjd s l s
काँपती हुई कातती हैं। यदि माणिक्य भी बदले में दिये जायें, तो भी ऐसे सूत
dk eV; egxk gh jgxkA (Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka
Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 222)

⁹³ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 189.

All the world's a stage,
 And all men and women merely players;
 They have their exits and their entrances...⁹⁴

But, the real performance is yet to come, at the master director's court. There is an emphasis on right action because we shall all be answerable to the divine Being at the "Master's court".⁹⁵

5.10 Advaitwada of Bulleh Shah and Shah Abdul Latif

As per the samkhya yoga, cosmology displays the existence of individuals as isolated personalities. The individual soul is a result of the split of the cosmic 'ahamkara' as depicted in diagram 2.

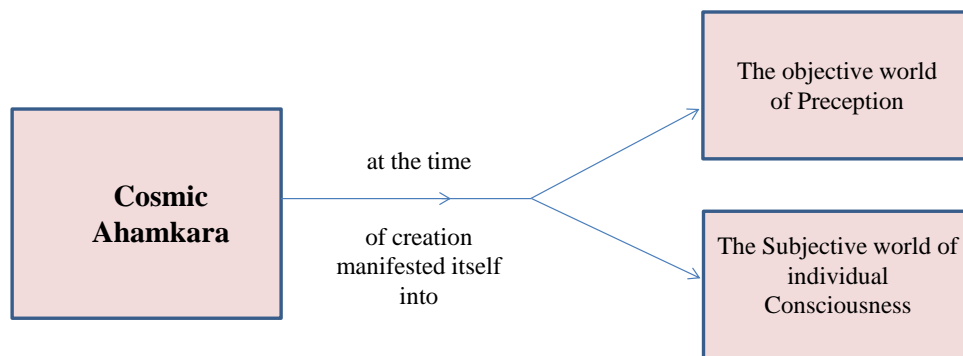


Diagram 2

The union of the 'jiva' with the cosmic consciousness is through the recognition and isolation of the soul and realization of an eternal mode of being outside of time and space. After the recognition and isolation of the soul, the next step is the destruction of the particular, the individual consciousness and restoration to the cosmic consciousness, which is the originator of the particular, individual consciousness. Diagram 3 presents a parallel journey from the subjective individuality of the seeker to the cosmic consciousness; call it the cosmic Ahamkara of the Indian mysticism or the cosmic consciousness of the divine Beloved in Sufi parlance. The Sufi concept of 'fana' has a parallel concept of 'nirvana' and 'moksha' in Indian mysticism.

⁹⁴ William Shakespeare. *As You Like It*. Web. 30 March 2019. <www.poetryfoundation.org/poems>

⁹⁵ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 189.

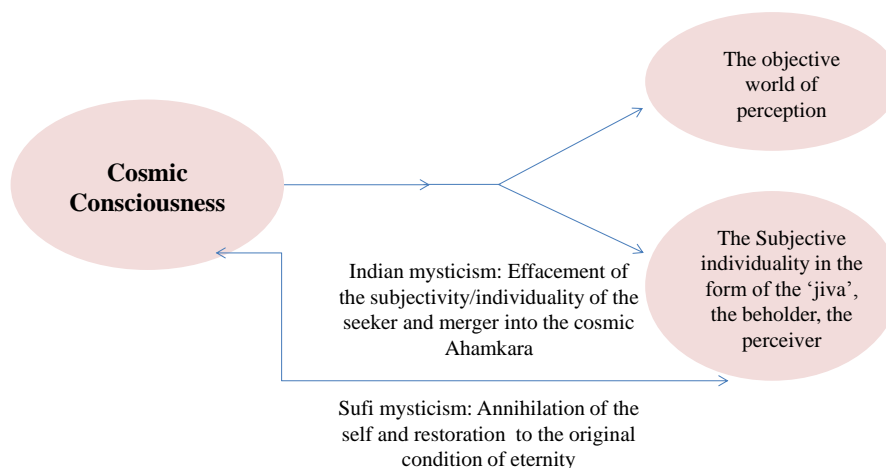


Diagram 3

The state of ‘Fana’ or self-annihilation is attained through the destruction of all desires (‘nafs’). Shorn of desires and cravings, human being gets rid of pain, sorrow, anxiety as well as happiness which are a concomitant of those desires. Consequent upon the state of ‘fana’ or self-effacement, the ardent and undistracted seeker attains the state of absolute unison with divine being. The following verses from *Mundaka Upanishad* substantiate the Indian mystical concepts parallel to Sufi concepts of ‘fana’ and ‘baqa’:

As the flowing rivers in the ocean
 Disappear, quitting name and form.
 So the knower, being liberated from name and form,
 Goes unto the Heavenly Person, higher than the high.⁹⁶
 He becomes merged in the Supreme imperishable soul.⁹⁷

The divine Being is understood in Sufi paradigm as having a dual aspect: ‘*Huwiyyat*’ (He-ness) and ‘*Aniyyat*’ (I-ness). ‘He-ness’ refers to the ‘Hu’ of the dhikr, to the hidden Oneness with no fetters of individuation, to be lost in the hidden One-ness⁹⁸. ‘Aniyyat’ or I-ness is that aspect of the Supreme where “the divine unity points to itself” through the universe.⁹⁹ These two modalities converge into a third stage, denominated as ‘wahidiyyat’, or the unity in plurality. Having reached the plane of multiplicity, the divine Being preserves unity in plurality.

⁹⁶ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p 149.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p 150.

⁹⁸ Ibid. p 59.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p 59.

Masood Ali Khan and S.Ram draw an apt parallel of this stage with the neo-Platonic system:

“The All-Soul includes and is All-the-Souls”¹⁰⁰

Here, the implication is not that of close approximation but that of identity between the souls and the All-soul. The concept is qualified by a citation from Jami:

*All degrees and hierarchies are but details of the Unity;
the many are identical in essence with the One.¹⁰¹*

The ‘many’ are understood as not just an extension and manifestation of the ‘One’ but as quintessentially identical with the Divine Being. Conversely, the ‘real’-ization of this stage at the human end makes up for the evanescence of all dichotomies, schisms and dilemmas. This stage is where seminal Sufi poets like Bulleh Shah and Shah Abdul Latif want humanity to arrive at. It is, no doubt, in this stage that the venerated early Sufi, Mansur al Hallaj, proclaimed ‘anal Haq’, ‘I am Truth’. This is the stage where the two aspects of the divine Being ‘*Huwiyyat*’ and ‘*Aniyyat*’ collude into a single unity. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram conclude this explanation with a beautifully lucid citation from *Gulshan-i-Raz*:

‘Everyone not harbouring doubt knows that there is only one single existence. But there is no duality for Truth—in that there is no ‘I’, no ‘we’ and no ‘Thou’. I, we, Thou and he are all one thing. There is no distinction at all in Oneness’¹⁰²

Shah Latif, in his *Risalo*, expresses his belief in the ‘many’ being circumscribed by the supreme unifying force, hence:

From One, many to being came;
‘many’ but Oneness is;
Don’t get confounded, Reality

¹⁰⁰ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p 59.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.p 59.

¹⁰² Ibid.p 59

Is 'One', this truth don't miss--
 Commotion's vast display -- all this
 I vow, of loved-One is.¹⁰³

'Commotion' and its 'vast display', in its multi-faceted and myriad forms, are the extension of the lord: "Reality is 'One'".

Jalaludin Rumi advocates annihilation of the distinction between "this and that" and to free oneself from the "tyranny" of dualism:

O Heart! Until, in the prison of deception,
 You can see the difference between This and That,
 For an instant detach from this Well of Tyranny; stand
 Outside.¹⁰⁴

Latif expresses his belief in annihilation of all dualism. In "Sur Yaman Kalyan", Latif defines non-dualism as the essential characteristic of a Sufi:

Just as the breath traverses through each and every vein
 of human body. So does the Sufi takes a universal
 itinerary. As a non-dualist, he resides inside every heart.
 If expressed in words, this is blasphemy and irreverence
 of the omnipresence of the Lord.¹⁰⁵ (Translation mine)

¹⁰³ Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. Vol 2. 2003. p 32.

तू चउ अल्लाहु हेकिडो बाई बी म सिखु,
 l kb fy[: ks fy[k] l pks v[k: eu eA
 rē dgks fd vYyk ,d gA nl jh clyh er l h[kkA vius eu es og
 l Ppk v{kj gh fy[krs jgkA Ibid. p 46.

¹⁰⁴ Idries Shah. *The Way of the Sufi*. 1968. p 106

¹⁰⁵ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 63.

l i i h l s l h h k f u e j जीऊँ रगुनि में साहु,
 सा न करे गालिहड़ी, जीअँ पीयों परूड़े पसाहु,
 vfgfl bz xpkqj tdk djs if/jkA
 t s s 'kjhj dks ul &ul ea 'okl dk l pkj g j ml h rjg l i i h k kA
 सर्वत्र विहार है (अद्वैतवादी होने से उनका सबके हृदयों में स्थान है)। वह
 ckr (jgL:) fd l s ugha dgrA ; fn idV dja rks ; g ,d xpkq gS
 (l i i h k kA की तरीकत नाम की मंजिल के विरुद्ध है)।

This step towards what Whitman, the American transcendentalist, would call 'cosmic consciousness' where the subject steps out of his centripetal consciousness and feels a sense of identification with other human beings is reached only through the evanescence of the egotistic 'I'.

The world with 'I' doth overflow
And with it flaunts about--
But its own 'self' it doth not know...
't is a magician's spell.¹⁰⁶

The 'modus operandi' for killing the ego is through **silence**. The Sufi introspects more, articulates less. He refines his dualistic thoughts in the meandering alleys of the mind and dissolves all dualistic impulses:

To hear vile words, and not return,
But hear them silently;
This is the pearl, most precious pearl,
We in guides' teachings see--
But decked in jewels he will be
Who with 'silence' the ego kills.¹⁰⁷

"Sur Sorath" presents the bard and the king flowing into a unified harmonious whole. The mellifluous divine music played by the minstrel makes the king give up his whole being for the divinity flowing from the minstrel's instrument:

The bard as though a living string,
played with humility;

¹⁰⁶ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. P 40.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p 41.

v.kponfu e pm] pofu p; ks fol kfj]
vBbz igj vnc l ij bgkbz i kfj]
पायो मुँह मूननि में xējr l k. ij xqkfj]
मुफ्ती मझि विहारि, त काज़ीअ कायारो न थिए।
ftlghus dñ ugha dgk mlga rē u dgk ftlghus de T+knk dgk Hkh glj ml s
भी भुला दो। आठों पहर बड़े अदब के साथ इसी पद्धति का पालन करो। घुटनों
के बीच मुँह डालकर, निरहंकार औज uez gkdj (thou) xqkfjka food dls
vius vlnj LFku nkj rls dkt+ka ds dk; y u jglxka (Motilal Jotwani,
ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 73)

The Raja in his palace fine,
 To hear him did agree;
 He mercifully called him in,
 And met him graciously--
 Then prince and bard, one harmony,
 One single 'self' became!¹⁰⁸

The submission of one's head, symbolically the seat of ego as well as desires, is the price for this divine union:

“not wealth like this, but head
 Of Raja do I claim!”¹⁰⁹

The egotistic self is the enemy and the hindrance in union with the divine Beloved. Says Latif, in "Sur Asa":

Cursed be duality, Beloved,
 From 'Self' do shelter me--
 O, hold the 'I' near thee,
 But thou canst reach 'thyself', O master.¹¹⁰

Bulleh Shah expresses his belief in non-dualism hence:

It's all in One contained.

¹⁰⁸ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 54.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p 55.

uk; ls uokcfu tk] l kfj; ls dVs l kg
 [kfycdq l f> l pkg] dku NMhlnk fdFkghA
 वह सिर माँगता है, सिर ही चाहता है। सिर के बिना सुलह नहीं। गरीबों को
 NMfk ugh yfdu l p j ehjls dks Hkh ekjrk gA uokcha dks uokdj it.k gj
 yrk gA fl jtugkj l pg gks; k 'lke] dgh Hkh ugh NM/xkA
 (Motilal Jotwani. Ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 160.)

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p 58.

बनि! बियाई, सुफिरीं। प्राणं मूखे पलिए, “आऊँ ओरिया झलि, तोखे रसे
 “ते” घणी। प्रिय! दुई भाड़ में जाया तू उससे मुझ jkdA eA njs vR; ur fudV
 हूँ। कृपया) “मैं” ले ले (जिससे) “तू” मुझे पा सके। (Motilal Jotwani, ed.
Shah Latif ka Kavya. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 226.)

Understand the One and forget the rest.¹¹¹

Latif expresses the necessity for un-self conscious entry into the zone of non-dualism in “Sur Asa V”:

That is real dualism, when
Non-dualist yourself you call.¹¹²

A real non-dualist loses all consciousness of the self and the other as disparate entities. Says “sur Asa”:

Be shorn of separateness, and
'Ego' let not thy soul enthrall;
For 'this', doth not exist at all;
And 'that' not known is without 'this'.¹¹³

One who is full of one's 'self', ego-centric and self-opinionated, won't have the psychological acumen to accommodate ideas extraneous to himself. The reason for the poet's prescription of non-dualism is that the beauty of the Beloved is to be attained beyond the restrictive confines of the self and the other, and beyond the binary opposites which govern quotidian human discourses:

'yes' and 'no', still within reach
Of earthly ideas are;
But beyond all vision far
Is the Beauty that I seek.¹¹⁴

There seems to be a building up of the concept of 'advaita' in both Latif and Bulleh Shah. 'Advaita' means non-dualism, or unity- of- being. The first stage in understanding this unity is unity within the self. Second is unity of the self with the

¹¹¹ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 37.

bd uplrs foPp xy ePdnh , A
i OM+updrk NkM+fgl kcla ur----¹¹¹
, d uprs ea ckr ijh gks tkrh gS
uprs dks i dMf fgl kc&fdrkc NkM+ ns----- (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012.p 109)

¹¹² *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 59.

¹¹³ Ibid. p 59.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p 60.

outside world. Third is unity of the self with the Supreme divine force. The first stage implies a splintering of binaries which define the empirical world. The binary opposites which define and act as a vehicle for language are splintered in the Sufi paradigm. A verse from Rumi is worth citation:

Today I am in such shape
That I can't differentiate
The load from the donkey.
I am in such shape today,
That I don't know which is the thorn
And which is the rose.
My love put me in this shape today.
I don't know who is the Lover
Or who is the Beloved.
Yesterday, drunkenness led me
To the door of the Love.
But today I can't find
The door or the house.
Last year I had two wings.
Fear and hope.
Today, I don't know of wings,
Don't know how to fly,
Don't know of my lost fears.¹¹⁵

The verse presents a compendium of the Sufi's reaching the stage of unity of Being. Rumi describes Sufi as absolutely free of worldly desires. Humans would require wings to fly up to a destination. But a Sufi does not need wings because his Beloved's abode is within his heart. Hence, the distance between the seeker and the sought gets nullified. The journey is to be ventured within, not without. Laymen carry on their lives on the wings of "fear and hope". In the verse from Rumi, fear and anxiety, whose seed lies in a haunting past, and 'hope' for a perfection- ridden haven, envisioned in some distant future, are dispelled in the Sufi mind. Sufi cherishes the moment of union with the divine Beloved in the present moment of realization of 'unity of Being'.

¹¹⁵ James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds. *Essential Sufism*. 1997. p 38.

The acme of the vision of non-dualism is the obliteration of all doubt as to the identity of the Beloved and the essence of the human self:

For whom anxiously we pine,
We ourselves are those;
O doubt, be gone with all your woes
For loved-ones we have found.¹¹⁶

5.11 Realization that the way to unity with God is a lonesome journey.

Latif's sur "Sohini" says

Donot take the 'self' with you. Forget all support.
Sohini! True love will traverse you through tough
terrains. Those with true thirst will cross the deep
waters with ease.¹¹⁷ (Translation mine)

And says Bulleh Shah

They bade me adieu and left for their homes. I, like a
lonesome bird, separated from my native bower, leave
for my marital home¹¹⁸ (Translation mine)

¹¹⁶ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p63.

असीं सिक्वूँ जनिखे, से तौं असीं पाण,
हाणे वजु गुमान! सही सुजाता सुपिरीं¹¹⁶
ge ftuds fy, rM+ jgs g\$ os [kq ge gh g\$ gs Hkæ! vc Hkx tA
l ktu dks vc l gh igpku fy; k g\$
(Jotwani, Motilal, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 231.)

¹¹⁷ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 101.

i k.kq e [kf.kft i k.k l \$ ol hyk fol kfj]
yM+y\$kk,] l (fg.kh! i hfr fo>nbz i kfj]
l s rrq ya/hn; r kfj] mda vxgq fuf t l \$
vi us l kfk vki dks Hkh u ys pyA l c l gk; d HkykA l (fg.kh! ; g i hfr
gh mnf/ ds vk?kkria l s cpkrh rps i kj dj nxha os 'kh?kz xgjs nfj; k dks
i kj djxh] ftudh l gkf; dk l Pph mRd. Bk g\$

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p 205

l Hks Vlg /jka un eMvka
e\$ gks bd bDdyM+ Vgjvka
gkbvka Mkjka e\$ dqt U; kjhA
e\$ s Vjus nh gkbz R; kjhA¹¹⁸
l Hkh e>s fonk djds ?kja dks pyh x; ha e\$, d vdsyh gkdj fonk gks
x; h e\$ Mkyh l s fcNM+ i dNh t\$ s U; kjh gks x; ha

The sense of identity between the human seeker and the divine beloved is to be realized in the amphitheater of the inmost being. We come across the following lines in “Sur Asa”:

Whose body is a rosary,
The mind is a bead, a harp the heart,
Love-strings are playing there the theme
Of unity in every part;
The nerves do chant;" there's none like thee;
The 'one'and only one thou art.--
Even sleeping beauty they impart,
Their very sleep their worship is.¹¹⁹

It is interesting to note that in “Sur Dahru”, 'sleep' is deplored for the loss of time incurred in human aspiration to attain the Beloved:

Sleeper arise! akin to sin
Is such a senseless sleep--
Kingly affection none can win
By sleeping recklessly.--¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 66.

The Sindhi version in Devnagri script reads:

ruq rLchq] euq ef.k; k] fnfy naqk tfu]
rnq tsryc t] ognr fl fj otfu]
og-ngq yk 'kjhil yqg bgls jkxq jxqfu]
ls l qkbz tlxfu] fuM bcknr mfuthA
ftudk 'kjhj gh l pfjuh (ekyk) g\$ euqk eudk g\$ हृदयतानपूरा है,
vlg ftuds (relluk ds) rkj ml , dkkRek ds साथ झंकृत होते हैं,
^og , d g\$ vlg vuqe g\$; gh jkx ftl ds jx&रग में गूँजता है, वे सोते
gh tkxrs g\$ vlg mudh funk gh bcknr g\$ intk g\$
(Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 233.)

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* p162.

सुता! उथी जागु, निंड न कजे एतिरी,
सुल्तानी सुहागु, निडुंनि कन्दे न थिए।
सोए हुए! उठ, जाग इतनी नींद नहीं करती चाहिए। सुलतानी सुहाग
नींद करते नसीब नहीं होता।
(Motilal Jotwani. ed ., *Shah Latif ka Kavya*, trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969.p 219.)

It is this union which is sought in the whirling ecstasy of the Mevlawi performance of 'Sama', where all distinctions and dichotomies vanish. The dancer and the dance unite into an indistinguishable whole and the seeker enters a phase of self-annihilation and self-effacement. At the microcosmic human level, the consorted ecstatic whirling movements of the dancing dervishes epitomize the macrocosmic movement of the spheres. The music of Sama replicates the divine music of the spheres. All distinctions lost; there is absolute harmony between the internal and the external, the microcosm and the macrocosm, and an unmitigated union between the seeker and the sought. The thought reverbrates the following verse from *Ashtavakra Gita*, the seminal text used by Ramakrishna Paramhansa to pass on the legacy of advaita Vedanta to his disciple Vivekananda:

*Gyaanam gyeyyam tatha gyaata tritayam naasti
vaastavam,*

Agyaanadbhaati yatredamsohamasmi niranjanah.

Knowledge, knower and knowable-- these three do not
in reality exist. I am that stainless self in which this triad
appears through ignorance.¹²¹

Epistemologically, the universe consists of the knower, the act of knowledge and the object of knowledge. These three parameters, ascribed to x, y, and z axes in a three dimensional diagram would meet at a common point of intersection: the zero point of the three axes. The supreme moment of union with the divine Beloved is also an experience of reaching the point of intersection where the knower, the known and the knowable become one.

This comes close to the concept of 'shunya' as a desired state which enables repudiation of thought, self-consciousness and all egotism. Emptying the mind of all thoughts makes space for concentration on the divine being:

A stage where you become zero, you become nothing,
you don't exist. That is the stage when you contemplate
yourself because the self, who actually is the universal

¹²¹ *Ashtavakra Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nityaswarupananda. 1953.p 26.

self takes over your individual self. You cease to exist
and only the universal self remains.¹²²

Bulleh Shah says:

My lord comes in the guise of man.
He is the tiger, He is the kill,
He himself is the raider.
He is the Master, He is the slave,
And is himself the slave trader.¹²³ (Shah, 255)

Bulleh Shah calls him a juggler, who makes the world dance like puppets.

In the second stage, there is an effacement of ego and a realization of God's presence closer than the "jugular vein"¹²⁴:

The moment I fell in love, I lost my creed.
God gave me a new identity.
He's closer than the jugular vein, it's believed.
Heer became herself the Ranjha youth.¹²⁵

In such an intense psychological state, there is a realization of lack of distinction between the seeker and the sought:

Bulleh is rid of his ego.
A mere glimpse of the master was his remedy.
His master is in Bulleh and Bulleh is his lord.¹²⁶

In the third stage, there is a loss of distinction between the world inside and the world outside and there is a realization of God's immanence in every bit of the visible world. In "Sur Sasui Abri", Latif remarks:

¹²² Moosa Raza. *In Search of Oneness*. 2012.p 142.

¹²³ *Sain Bulleh Shah. The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 255.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p 247.

¹²⁵ *Sain Bulleh Shah. The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996.p 247.

¹²⁶ Ibid. p 245.

Refuge seek in : 'Whate'er i saw
 God was in't...' ¹²⁷

And Bulleh Shah says

I see him in every face;
 And yet people notice Him not
 Here and there its all His grace. ¹²⁸

William Wordsworth understood nature in its two variable moods: the beautiful and the sublime. In Shah Abdul Latif, we witness the 'sublime' as much as the soft and harmonious beatitude of nature. Nature for Latif is often an index of divine benediction and registers the immanence of the supreme being in the empirical world. However, nature in its myriad aspects often acts as an active force either meant to disparage the earthly seeker, or acting as a total deterrent to him, challenging the bravery, sincerity and firmness of the earthly lover for the divine Beloved.

Both the poets eschew narrow caste and communal confines and foreground the quintessential humanity of human beings:

What use is it bowing one's head?
 To what avail has prostrating lead?
 Reading kalma you make them laugh.
 Absorbing not a word while the Quran you quaff
 The truth must be here and there sustained,
 It's all in One contained. ¹²⁹

¹²⁷ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 22.

¹²⁸ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 65.

¹²⁹ Ibid. p. 68

on oqjkuka i < & i < + FkDo
 fl tns djfnvka /l x, eRFk
 uk jCc rhjFk uk jCc eDo
 ftu i k; k fru uij vuokj
 b'kd nh ufovka uoha cgkjA
 (Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 97-98)

Bulleh Shah as well explicitly discredits communal identities and schisms made in the name of Hindu temples, Sikh shrines and Muslim mosques, in stringent terms:

Lumpens live in Hindu temples.
And Sharks in Sikh shrines.
Musclemen live in Muslim mosques:
Lovers live away in their clime.¹³⁰

Writes Bulleh:

Those who call me Syed
Are destined to hell made for them;
Those who call me Araeen
Have the swings in heaven laid for them.¹³¹

Bulleh Shah repudiates his so called high 'Syed' caste which is a hinderance in the path to the Supreme 'Saeen' and admonishes people:

If you wish to enjoy the glory of the Garden,
Go and serve the Araeen.
Why bother about Bulleh's caste?
Obey the command that comes from Saeen.¹³²

Bulleh Shah reduces human being to his quintessential humanity, with no barriers of caste and religion:

I know not myself
How do I gather tidings of my love?
I belong neither to earth nor fire nor water nor air.
Says Bulleh, I am kneaded up in my Master
The way salt is contained in flour.¹³³

¹³⁰ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 189.

¹³¹ Ibid. p 97

¹³² Ibid. p 97.

¹³³ Ibid. p 227.

Both Latif and Bulleh Shah discredit the centrality of dogmatic prescriptive religious rituals. Bulleh writes with a sense of conviction that God has stricken the unstruck melody and granted exemption from "fasts, prayers and pilgrimages":

Of fasts and prayers and pilgrimages
My love has made me free.¹³⁴

Bulleh Shah gives more importance to the basic humanity of all human beings and keeps all men at par:

When he comes to my house,
I forget the religious commandments.
I see him in every figure;
Inside and outside it's he
The misled people do not see.¹³⁵

Bulleh Shah's sociological consciousness appears even more revolutionary than the nirgun saints of the medieval period. The discourse of Kabir and Raidas is more of the 'dos' and 'dons' of a pietistic life. There is more of didacticism via the method of definition of what's to be done and what is not. Kabir's 'Jaat na poocho saadhu ki', where there is a denial of hierarchical superiority of upper class/ caste echelon find a parallel in Raidas' 'Ab mohi vipravar dandat karen', where there is a subversion of high and low class/caste equations. Bulleh Shah goes a step further and has a more compassionate take on man-made hierarchies and expresses not just parity but a mystical communion with the dalit, the low caste 'shudra' and the untouchable. Hence, Bulleh Shah's mysticism does not thrive on the absolutely airy-fairy esoteric realm of other-worldly devotionism. If his prescribed emotion has to work, it has to begin from the here and now. Hence, we find in Bulleh Shah a deliberate self-abasement, when Bulleh Shah calls himself the sweeper deputed by the Supreme lord.

In "Sur Yaman Kalyan", Shah Abdul Latif expresses meaninglessness of getting involved in the schismatic communal, caste and class distinctions and expresses this disinterest of the true Sufi as a reason for dislike for Sufis among some sections of society:

¹³⁴ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 125.

¹³⁵ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 125.

A Sufi is without a creed. He is free of all shackles. No one likes him. He fights a battle inside himself, never revealing his inner malady. He even helps his enemies.
(Translation mine.)¹³⁶

It is interesting to note that both Latif and Bulleh Shah do not attest to conventional orthodox pietistic traditions. Bulleh Shah even seems to be making a direct dig at those spiritual aspirants who started living like a recluse in the jungles, starving and observing intense ascetic life-styles. First person who comes to mind within this ascetic modality is Baba Farid. However, Farid was an early Sufi, out on a quest for the divine springs of human life. After wandering in the jungles for twelve years, Farid also realizes the need for an introspective turn, instead of dwelling upon the external observance of ascetic practices. However, while expressing the wantonness of the rituals of fasting, abstinence and asceticism, says Bulleh Shah:

Some retire to the jungles in vain.
Others restrict their meals to a grain.
Misled they waste away unfed
And come back home half-alive, half-dead.
Emaciated in the ascetic postures feigned.

Bulleh Shah does not show an aversion to the basic conventional practices of offering prayers to the lord. Says Bulleh Shah:

It's all in One contained.
Seek your master, say your prayers and surrender to God.¹³⁷

The implication is that the Sufi is not averse to offering prayers. He is against the external display of devotion without inner faith in the lord. "Surrender[ing] to God"

¹³⁶ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 63.

सूफी लाकूफ़ि, कोन भाँसि करू,
eḍ kbz eḍ fo<] i /fj ukgl is]
tuha l k. kḥl os] fFk, ruha tks okg: A
li ḥ yketgc gkrk gḥ og l c cā/uka l s eḍr gḥ dkbz ml s i l ḥn ugha
djrkḥ og vḥnj gh vḥnj (vius vkil) yMḥ djrk gḥ ckgj jgL;
ixḍV ugha djrkḥ ml ds l kFk ftudk oḥ gḥ og mudh l gk; rk djrk gḥ

¹³⁷ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 37.

has as its concomitant absolute faith in the divine Beloved and total submission towards Him. In this state of absolute faith and submission, the seeker is able to become free of anguish and fear:

If you wish to be free from anguish and fear.
 Never read the text over which you have to think.
 Let's go there, oh Bulleh, where they forbid not to drink.¹³⁸

Ritualistic religion teaches fear of God. Man gets entangled and beleaguered by the superficialities of religion. Fear and anguish pester human relationship with God. A relation, without faith, predicated on fear and discontent, doubt and anguish is fake and insincere. Sufis emphasise the sterling value of pure gold, symbolic of the sublime devotion to the Supreme Being, which is kept above the laws of the 'shariat':

Come Bulleh! Let's go to the goldsmith
 He handles many a mould.
 He makes a variety of ornaments
 You ask just for gold.¹³⁹

It is this Sufi modality, which makes the the human seeker gradually arrive at a state of 'fana' or self-effacement and merger with the divine Being:

It is you, none of me, my love!
 It is you, none of me.
 Like the shadow of a make-believe
 You haunt my mind.
 If I speak, you speak
 If I am quiet,
 So are you, I find.
 If I sleep,
 You sleep with me,
 If I move,
 You refuse to stay behind.
 Bulleh's lord has arrived home,

¹³⁸ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 57

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* p 57.

I'm sacrifice to my master kind.
 It is you, none of me, my love!
 It is you, none of me.¹⁴⁰

As regards Bulleh Shah's muting down conflict, we can understand it as a result of Bulleh Shah's mystical sensibility which discredits and deconstructs the conventional binaries of black and white, virtue and vice, pious and impious, when confronted with the overwhelming power of love: "The love of Bulleh Shah's teacher ('Sahu') is astonishing. He offers redemption even to the one without virtue ('avgunhara')".¹⁴¹

These dichotomies are constructed and operate in the empirical or phenomenal world and must be transcended. God welcomes the true lover and firm believer in his fold and willingly forgets all his discrepancies. Latif also said that he belongs to the space between Shias and Sunnis. Here are the true Sufi saint poets whose 'baikaid' sensibility blatantly refused to be tied up with man-made worldly discourses. The manifestation of such all-embracing divine love finds an apt effusion in Bulleh Shah's description of the ethereal music emanating from Kanha's flute:

Listening to the flute on the river bank in the jungle
 I forgot myself.
 Wounded with the arrows of an unstruck melody
 I forgot the world.
 Longing to have a glimpse of Him
 I forgot everything else.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996..p 59.

¹⁴¹ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 170.

ca'ys 'kgq nh i hr vuksh
 rkjs voxugkjs um

¹⁴² *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal.1996. p 125.

The punjai version in Devnagri says:

ejyh ckt mBh vu ?krkj
 eSh Hk'y xb; ka l Hk ckrka-
 yx x; s vugn ok. k U; kj
 NkV x; s nfu; k ns oM+ i l kj
 vl ha eq'k ns[k. k ns o. kt kj
 nbvka Hk'y xbvka l Hk ckrka

(Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012.p 171.)

All worldly dichotomies are transcended by the 'anhad naad', the celestial, divine music without limits and boundaries, a song palpable only in a state of meditation.

5.12 Union between the Human Lover and the Divine Beloved

Relinquishing materialism is the foremost step in Sufi ascent of the mystical ladder. Shah Latif expresses the Sufi's distaste for all materialism in a succinct and lucid couplet in "Sur Leela":

Pendent of sorrow was, what you
A necklace thought to be...¹⁴³

The materialistic world is itself a scintillating pendent of sorrow tied across the neck of one who succumbs to its meretricious veneer. Worldly resplendence takes human being away from God:

The Jewel is no jewel--nay,
Nor necklace worth to tempt your heart;
Its origin is clay and bits
Of glass it doth betray;
Cursed trinket, in its fine array
Made many from the loved-one part.--¹⁴⁴

Distaste for acquisitive and materialistic instinct is allied with the indispensable fact of the imminence of death. Human mortality is variously emphasized in mystical writings. But what is more perspicuous in Sufi poetry is the human lover's, not just fearlessness of death, but an avid desire for its hasty approach. Splintering the bonds which tie the human seeker to the memories of the past and to the present pains and pleasures, the seeker moves on to a death-in-life like existence. He hopes for a re-awakening consequent upon the death of the physical self: a spiritual resuscitation and consequent union with God. We read in "Sur Ramkali":

Resting and reclining, you tend to lose yourself in your
past. O lover! Die today itself, tomorrow every one else

¹⁴³ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965.p 140.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p 140.

will die.¹⁴⁵ (Translation mine)

Here we come across two themes prevalent in Latif's *Risalo*: life-in-death and death-in-life like existence. Latif says in "Sur Sasui: Madhuri--XVIII":

Who die before death, never will
 Destroyed by dying be,--
 Who live before second life they see
 Will live eternally.¹⁴⁶

The first couplet presents death-in-life like state of the death of worldliness and materialism. The second couplet presents a life-in-death state of rejuvenation of life-eternal in the presence of the divine beloved after the death of the physical self. Death, for the Sufis, is not a deplorable finale of life to be shunned or to be afraid of. It is a cherished prelude to the revivification of life in communion with the divine Beloved:

Die to be beautiful, life is
 Hindrance twixt him and you,--
 Helpless one, boldly do pursue
 Give breath to find friend.¹⁴⁷

Latif lays stress on not losing time in fickle worldly activities. Intense desire for the beloved coupled with the pain of separation from Him will pave the way for union with Him. Otherwise death will appear in its ghastly form, instead of a welcome friend who could unite us with the divine Beloved. The sparcity of time and the urgency of appropriate action have a strong adumbration of the 'carpe diem' theme of John Donne, the seventeenth century British metaphysical poet. However, the focus of Latif's carpe diem is a total turnaround from that expounded in Donne's poem "To his

¹⁴⁵ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 208.

cBks i qnha i :] dfj dk fgavkj gy.k th]
 vtj vknd h! e;] l pkg e: nks l Hkq dka
 cBs cBs vrhr ea [kks tkrs gkj ij fe-k vc dN pyus dh djk
 vugjxh! vkt gh ejk dy rks l c ejk

¹⁴⁶ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 132.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p 132.

Coy Mistress Going to Bed". The end and purpose of Latif's carpe diem is not worldly or sensual enjoyment but directing every precious moment of life in a teleological movement towards union with the divine Beloved: " I could not search my Beloved one, and/ my life's already past..."¹⁴⁸

Absolute faith and submission in the divine Beloved leads to desired union with Him. The lightened Sufi in a state of rapture passes beyond the distinction between the subject and the object. Approaching the oneness and unity between the two, the true Sufi either takes the negative path expressing his identity as 'no-thing' or affirming that he is all things. An example of the former is the following verse by Jaluluddin Rumi:

Lo, for I to myself am unknown,
 Now in God's name what must I do?
 I adore not the cross nor the crescent, I
 Am not a Giour nor a Jew.
 East or West, land nor sea is my home,
 I have kin nor with angel nor with gnome,
 I am wrought not of fire nor of foam, I
 Am shaped not of dust nor of dew.¹⁴⁹

The same poet presents the affirmative aspect of union between the external and the internal world, hence:

If there be any lover in the world, O Moslems, 'tis I.
 If there be any believer, infidel, or Christian hermit, 'tis I....
 The two-and-seventy creeds and sects in the world Do not really
 exist: I swear by God that every creed and sect—'tis I...
 Earth and air and water and fire, no, body and soul too—'tis I.¹⁵⁰

The former citation from Rumi attests to the state of 'fana', of self- annihilation in which all relations between the self and the world are nullified:

¹⁴⁸ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 131.

¹⁴⁹ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mystics of Islam*. Kindle ed. N. Pag.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Notxhing of themselves is left in them; as individuals
they are dead. Immersed in Unity, they know neither
law nor religion nor any form of phenomenal being.¹⁵¹

The aforecited text from Rumi presents the seeker as having reached a state ahead of self-annihilation, where having lost one's egotistic and individualistic subjectivity and finding union with the 'One', the 'Truth', he goes a step further: after having passed beyond the self, the seeker finds eternal union with the life of the Beloved and to abide in God, in a state of 'baqa', i.e., "continuing in the unitive state, he returns with God to the phenomenal world from which he sets out, and manifests unity in plurality. In Shah Latif's "Sur Sohini", Sohini realizes that the baked pot which she uses as a support to cross the river, are the real hinderances in her union with Sahar. The ultimate union was attained when the unbaked pot splinters, while crossing the river, on the way to her meeting with Sahar:

The means on which she had relied,
Did thrust her in the flood;
And only after she had died
She heard the herdsmen's call.-¹⁵²

Human being braces himself with worldly reinforcements and seeks for succour in worldly sources. But till the time he tenaciously holds on to material means to sustain his flotation and attain salvation, the earthly seeker remains separated from the divine Beloved. In the next bait, Latif registers Sohini's realization that

"the jar is broken!let it go
Obstructive screen it was mere-
My real being is singing still
Soul-music still is here

¹⁵¹ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mystics of Islam*. Kindle ed. N. Pag.

¹⁵² *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi.1965. p 200.

And still I seek my Sahar dear,
Though without 'action' now."¹⁵³

The ultimate union is attained when the jar gets broken. Sohini does not feel intimidated by the elemental forces of nature. Latif writes in bait 37:

Hundreds were by the river drowned-
But river drowned was by the maid;
The current broke itself instead
By knocking bluntly against the banks.¹⁵⁴

The river currents come to a naught in confrontation with Sohini's indomitable will. The splinter-er of wills gets splintered instead. Latif's female protagonists emerge as stronger than the hardest impediments in their path. Says Sasui in Latif's sur "Sasui: Kohiyari- XVII":

O mountain, though you hot have grown
You can not harm me now;
You may be made of hardest stone
My limbs are iron- made--
't is no one's fault, it is my own
my own strange destiny.¹⁵⁵

Sasui and Sohini are stronger than their circumstances.

Hence, in "Sur Sohini", human being is pitted against the overwhelming forces of nature. On the one hand there's "A black foul night", on the other, a puny human being attempting to cross the river with "an unbaked jar". But because of Sohini's faith and

¹⁵³ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 200.

?kVks Hkxks r ?kksj; kj i k. kka gks fg tkc|

वाजदु वजे वजूद में, रह्यो रूह खाबु,

साहड़ रीअ सवाबु, आऊं घणोई ?kksj; ka

घड़ा टूटा तो अच्छा हुआ। उलटा, यह प्रतिबन्ध था। हृदय में बाजट (वाद्य

fo'ksk) ; k chu ct jgh gA vkRek gh ok| gA lktu ij lc dN

न्योछावर कर सकती हूँ। प्रिय मिलन ही सत्कर्मों का फल है।

(Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 100)

¹⁵⁴ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p201.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p 127.

submission to God, the " river doth appear/ a dry and open road."¹⁵⁶ Mystical union with the divine Being demands absolute faith in Him. Losing one's self in a single-minded pursuit of the divine beloved is important for both Bulleh Shah and Shah Abdul Latif. Sasui exhibits the same unerring quality of mind and soul:

Her virtuous mind on beauty of the glorious One intent;
Faithful up to the last... All spent-
The maid in mountain dies.¹⁵⁷

The phrase "all spent" emphatically expresses a state where the seeker is unburdened of his worldly orientation and all that he acquires in his brief earthly sojourn, no doubt akin to the Sufi state of 'fana'. There is an evanescence of the ego, physicality, consciousness and material bonds with worldly existence.

The third stanza of "Sasui: Abri XV" expatiates Sasui's unquenchable desire for Punhu's company:

Sasui, undone by longing, yet
Affects the longing more;
Drank deep of Punhu's company
And yet for more doth fret...¹⁵⁸

The more Sasui longs for Punhu, the more her desire for Punhu escalates. What is the remedy for Sasui's intense and unquenchable desire for Punhu? The answer is inscribed in Latif's admonition to all sincere devotees of God:

Your love is not where you surmise;

¹⁵⁶ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 197.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p 116.

Mjs , a Mkj3 I V I jfuth I I p3
is kb3 i qg&v M3 fue3y fugkj3
ykyu th yrhi0 p, I q3a I rh I kj3
fijhr. ks i kj3 ekjx ea eq/ epA
ihMkva ds igkja us I I p3 dks >dekj fn; ka fi0j Hkh fue3y fugkjr3 i qgw
dh vkj gh yxh jghA (v3r ea) i3 fuHkkrh ek/k ekxZ ea gh ej xbA
(Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 123.)

¹⁵⁸ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 116.

And walk where you think he be,
 Walk not to mounts, the wood you have
 to cross within you lies;
 Your being ask for all advice
 And strangers keep outside.¹⁵⁹

There is a further development in bait 40 of Latif's verse where in an introspective turn there is a novel recognition:

While peeping in myself I was,...
 I with my soul conversed;
 No camel-man was there to chase,
 All mountains had dispersed;
 'Punhu I had become....immersed
 In woe, but 'Sasui' was.¹⁶⁰

Till the time Sasui considered herself separate from Punhu, she was in pain. Once she started conversing with her soul, she found Punhu within. What's more, there is a feeling that she had become Punhu:

The clue of Him I got was:" God
 does everything pervade;
 He Himself is in every blade
 Without Him nought exists."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 120.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. p 121.

The Sindhi text in Devnagri reads:

igh tk ik.k e d; fe : g f jgk.k]
 नको डूँगर डेह में, नका केचियुनि काणि,
 पुन्हूँ थियंसि पाण, ससुई तां सूर हुआ।
 अपने में झाँककर, अन्तर्मुख हो कर, जब मैंने
 v lRed Fkk dh rks d k b l i g k M + u Fkk v l g u
 पुन्हू की कमी थी। अब स्वयं पुन्हू हो गई हूँ
 t c r d l d p z F k h j r c r d n g k F k d
 (Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*.
 Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 133)

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p 122.

In a parallel enunciation, Bulleh Shah says:

I see Him in every face;
And yet people notice Him not
Here and there it's all his grace.¹⁶²

Bulleh Shah evokes the pure love of Heer for her beloved Ranjha to express the potency of the pristine love as capable of transmogrifying Heer into her Beloved Ranjha. This is the desired merger of the human lover into the divine Beloved:

Remembering Ranjha day and night
I've become Ranjha myself.
Call me Dhido Ranjha,
No more I be addressed as Heer.
I am in Ranjha and Ranjha is in me.
There is no distinction left.
I am nowhere; he himself is there,
Himself he has empathy for me.¹⁶³

This returning back to the phenomenal world, after having passed into the state of 'fana', and seeing divine connection with every existing thing is called 'baqa':

It is not enough to escape from all that is creaturely, without entering into the eternal life of God the creator as manifested in His works. To abide in God (baqa) after having passed away from selfhood (fana) is the mark of the perfect man, who not only journeys to God,

¹⁶² *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 65.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* p 53.

jka>k jka>k d jnh uh eš
vki s jka>k gkbA
सद्दो नी मैंनुं थीदो रांझा,
gfj uk vk[ks dkbA
jka>k eš foPp eš jka>s foPp]
eš ugh vkg vki gš vki . kh]
vki djs fnytkbAA

(Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 165.)

i.e., continuing in the unitive state, he returns with God to the phenomenal world from which he set out, and manifests unity in plurality.¹⁶⁴

Nicholson further explains:

He who has attained to this station journeys in the Real, by the Real, to the Real, and then is a reality (haqq). Thus travelling onward, he arrives at the station of the Qutb, which is the station of perfect manhood.¹⁶⁵

Bulleh Shah says that shariat and Tariqat are for beginners on the mystical path. Shallow minds remain entangled in these and can not move beyond them:

Remaining silent is tough for a lover situated in the profundity of love. He understands the superficial aspect of the Shariat and the tariqat. However, the discourse of 'haqiqat' is easy for a true lover. People feel that such a person has failed in the observance of the 'shariat' and the 'tariqat'. They cannot understand the true lover, hence it is better to remain silent.¹⁶⁶

The fourth step is that of 'haqiqat', or the ultimate truth, which is revealed only to the true lovers. In "Sur Ghatu", Latif compares the true quester's concentration on the

¹⁶⁴ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mystics of Islam*. Kindle ed. IndoEuropean Publishing, 2010.N.Pag.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 117.

चुप करके करी गुजारे नूँ।¹⁶⁶

I p 'kjk rjhdr i Oksys gš

xYy pK&Fs in nh [ksys gš

tgk 'kjk rjho glks u

चुप करके करी गुजारे नूँ।¹⁶⁶

I p dgrs gh I c vlx&l h yx tkrh gš bl fy, I e>nkj dks pš
djds xq&kjk djuk plfg; A i jUrq vkf'kd ds fy, pš djuk dfBu gkrk
gš og iæ dh xgjk& ea Mcdj tku yrk gš fd 'kjhvr vlx rjhdr
dh ckr rks mFkyh gš I qh&l qkbz ; k nk&jkbz gpb tcf& pl&Fs in] ; kuh
gdh& dh ckr iæ djus okya ds fy, I gt gš nfu; k dks yxrk gš
fd , d k vkneh 'kjhvr vlx rjhdr ds de&lk&h; vey I s gkjk
gvyk ; k pdk gvyk vkneh gš ; g ckr I e>uh ef'dy gš bl fy, pš
करके गुजारा करने में बुद्धिमानी है।

divine Beloved to that of the indomitable and unflinching resoluteness of the "shark-hunter's" 'mood':

Shark-hunters' 'mood' that is the way
a victory to reap.
Their eagerness for whirl-pools, and
Their longing for the deep,
Deprives them every night of sleep--
They yearn to kill the shark.¹⁶⁷

The shark is the veil, the obstruction in attaining the infinite:

In search, they into whirlpools got
And to fathomlessness...

They killed the shark; with happiness
Now beam fishermen's eyes.¹⁶⁸

The process of union with the Supreme godhead or the Beloved in the Sufi paradigm is a journey from 'becoming' to 'being', from being crystallized in one's individual egoistic subjectivity to being one with the divine Beloved, the supreme consciousness. This merger is the common point of intersection in the apparently varied discourses of the Indian Vedantism, the medieval Bhakti tradition and the Sufi paradigm. The tradition of the bhakti hagiography describes Meera's soul merging into the Supreme consciousness of her divine beloved Giridhar Gopal so that her life culminates in this sublime merger leaving only the end of her saree at the temple of Dwarika. This merger is in consonance with the articulation of ultimate oneness of the knower, the knowable and the knowledge, 'gyata', 'gyeyam' 'gyanam' respectively.

Interestingly, R.A.Nicholson's book *Sufis: The Mysticism of Islam*, in its first chapter, "The Path", discusses two aspects of the mystical development of a Sufi:

¹⁶⁷ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 167.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p 167.

- (i) The seeker of God becomes a traveller (salik); “he advances by slow ‘stages’ (maqamat) along a ‘path’ (tariqat) to the goal of union with Reality (fana fi’l- Haqq). These stages are which are a result of “the ascetic and ethical discipline of a Sufi”¹⁶⁹ and described as “abstinence, renunciation, repentance, poverty, patience, trust in God and satisfaction”.¹⁷⁰
- (ii) The states (hal) which God bestows upon the seeker correspond to the successive stages in his movement towards perfection in seeking the Beloved.

Nicholson’s explanation of the culmination of the Sufi path concludes hence:

Then and only then, is he permanently raised to the higher planes of consciousness which Sufis call ‘the Gnosis’ (ma’rifat) and ‘the Truth’ (haqiqat), where the ‘seeker’ (talib) becomes” the ‘knower’ or ‘gnostic’ (‘arif’), and realizes that knowledge, knower, and known are One.¹⁷¹

The path traversed by the mystic pronounced in the Indian mystical treatise, the *Ashtavakra Geeta* and the one traversed by a Sufi, as delineated by a Sufi scholar, culminates in the parallel description of union between “Gyanam, gyeyyam tatha gyaata”, “knowledge, known, and knower.” This is the heart of Sufi understanding of the hermeneutics of human efforts to attain the divine Beloved. Bulleh Shah says:

His name is on everyone’s lips,
In you He ever resides.
He is nearer than the jugular vein
And with you He ever resides.¹⁷²

He ever resides with the human lover. But the realization of the same is very important. For this, suggests Bulleh:

Give up indecision, falsehood, pettiness,
Have a taste of ecstasy and fear not.
This is how you reach His palace,

¹⁶⁹ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mystics of Islam*. Kindle ed. 2010. N.Pag.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid. p191.

If you see not, speak not, hear not.¹⁷³

Sight, speech and gearing are inefficacious in leading to a real-zation of the nearness of the divine Beloved. The realization of the oneness between the knower and the knowable is through the right path and the right knowledge:

He who longs to have His glimpse
Must get on to the proper path,
He is God and God is Him.¹⁷⁴

The seeker and the sought as well as the intermittent path become one in the moment of realization of the unity of being. Knower and knowable become identical in the pure frame of selflessness, love and self-effacement. Asserts Bulleh Shah:

He who loves the Lord becomes the Lord no wonder.¹⁷⁵

In a similar vein, says Latif:

One who desires the Lord, the lord desires tem aswell.¹⁷⁶

That is why, Sohini's unconditional and unmitigated love for Sahar makes her gladly embrace death. In this moment of consummate union, says Latif:

Sahar, Sohni and the sea
Inseparably 'One'—
This ineffable mystery
No one can ever solve.¹⁷⁷

Mystery it is; irresolvable and ineffable, yet registered by Shah Latif with conviction and mystical intensity. The understanding of the mystical renderings of both Shah Latif and Bulleh shah is predicated on the emotive and the instinctive planes. Logic and rationality, pragmatism and reasoning do not work here. The ultimaye haven for the human seeker is attained in a moment of absolute merger with the divine Beloved.

¹⁷³ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mystics of Islam*. Kindle ed. 2010. N.Pag.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.p 191.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p 199.

¹⁷⁶ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 102.

iNfu ts egkj [k] iNs l segk: ----

ts egj dks iNr h g\$ egj k Hk muckl iNr k gA

¹⁷⁷ *Sain Bulleh Bulleh: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 201.

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SUFISM IN SINDH AND PUNJAB: POETRY OF SHAH ABDUL LATIF AND BULLEH SHAH

*Thesis submitted to the University of Delhi for
the award of the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

NEELAM MITTAL

Under the Supervision of

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CONCLUSION

Sufism as a movement cannot and should not be studied in a vacuum. Shubha Chakraborty Dasgupta, in an article “State of the Discipline: The Indian Context” published in a journal of Comparative Literature called “Inquire” writes:

...deep engagements with areas of Indian Literature inevitably lead to a dynamic trans-national perspective, with the constant flow of people to and from the country to the outside world, and then, a moving caravan of thoughts, religions, myths and stories, and later, texts and translations.¹

It is important to understand that texts leave their footprints. Interactions between texts and authors across time and space are inevitable in the Sufi context as well.

A Sufi is a wanderer as is the Bhakti saint. The journey is metaphorical as well as literal. Early Muslim ‘jehadis’ brought with them Islamic mystics. Those who gravitated away from political patronage came close to the heart of the laymen and became the site of cultural exchange with the Indian mystical philosophy. *Guru Granth Sahib* became the icon of mystical amalgam and an epitome of the cultural amalgam being discussed here. Here, the question, who is being influenced by whom and who is at the receiving end of the cultural exchange, is futile. No linear one-way homogenizing theory can be posited for the explanation of one mystical trend influencing the other; although we can talk of a dialogical or reciprocal give and take of ideas. First Bhakti poem was written for Murugan, called Kartikey in North India, who is also the God of love and war. However, in the sixteenth century, Murugan loses his romantic and militaristic significance and becomes a child. Similarly, the image of Kali, the goddess of destruction and divine nemesis on the demons like ‘Raktabeeja’ and ‘Mahishasura’, is mollified in Bengal at a later stage. Instead of the Goddess of anger, she appears as a goddess of benediction. Hence, the relationship among mysticism, the deity and the devotee are subject to evolution and so has

¹ Shubha Chakraborty Dasgupta. “State of the Discipline: The Indian Context”. *Inquire*. Global Dialogues Issue 2.1: January 2012. Web. 17 July 2018.

mysticism been open to myriad influences. Hence, there is no linear or monolithic explanation of influence of one religious framework on the other. The cultural matrix shows criss-cross patterns of ideological interactions. Because of co-terminus and co-incidental presence of mystical elements in the medieval period, there is a complex cultural amalgam, irreducible to a linear pattern of influences. Hence, it is difficult to say that Sufism as an imported mystical Islamic stance influenced Indian Bhakti tradition or that the latter was more potent in its impact on the Sufi tradition. India carries a rich and diverse heritage of cultures, which has assimilated various religious ideologies due to its non-resistance, openness, acceptance and accommodation of manifold religious and mystical trends into the already existing multifarious religious systems. The Bhakti poets were known for their cosmic sensibility, unburdened by schismatic bigotry. Though divided into the 'saguna' and the 'nirguna' Bhakti poets and the latter further bifurcated into the Shaivite, the Vaishnavite and the Shakti cults, they found coherence in their ultimate urge for attainment of the Supreme lord, through diverse channels. The protest against the official Vedic religion was a protest against the corruption exhibited by those who malign and disparage the true spirit of religion, the self-serving Brahminical clergy. Sufi mysticism is understood as grounded upon a similar protest against Islamic ecclesiastical appropriation of the definition and practice of religion, foregrounding the ritualistic and formalistic elements of religion, to the jettisoning of the pristine message of the Quranic text. The urge to arrive at the quintessential connection between the human and the divine entity is at the heart of both the Bhakti and the Sufi paradigms. Their nonchalance of official religion stands against the beleaguering of the mind by excrescences of rituals and performances. Leaving these behind, they try to traverse the hitherto unbridgeable gap between the human soul and the divine Being.

Chapter one dwells upon the Sufi understanding of the relationship between the human and the divine realms. The relationship between God and the universe has been viewed in two formats: one, in which God circumscribes the phenomenal world; two, in which the consciousness of the created universe leads to a realization of the divine source. The two modalities are exhibited in the following Venn diagrams.

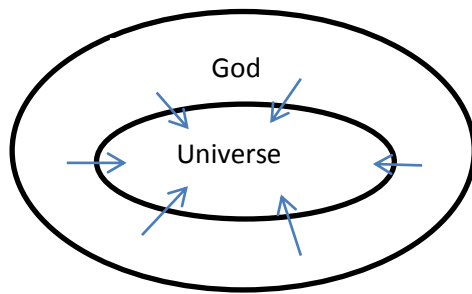


Figure 1

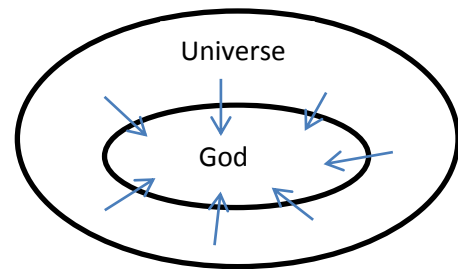


Figure 2

Figure 1 shows how God circumscribes the phenomenal world. The supreme divine force manifests itself and extends His Being in the empirical world. The essence of God percolates the fabric of the created world. This pertains to the Sufi concept of ‘Tanazzulat’ or descent or individuation of the Absolute in the objects of the created world and comes close to the ‘shuhudi’ concept of ‘All is from Him’. Figure 2 depicts how the phenomenal world evokes a palpability of God’s presence. Here, the consciousness of the created universe leads to a realization of divine consciousness. Here, the mystic infers the divine Being through His creation. This is in consonance with divine pantheism and comes under the purview of the immanence of God in the empirical world: the created world points towards the divine unity. However, the two Sufi frameworks culminate into an understanding of the third stage called ‘wahidiyyat’ or unity in plurality: ‘All is He’. In a single poetic articulation, Latif confirms his belief in both the modalities expressed in figure one and figure two. The two modalities of approaching the connection between God and His creation converge into Latif’s non-dualistic (‘advaitic’) mystical view:

From One, many to being came;
 'many' but Oneness is;
 Don't get confounded, Reality
 Is 'One', this truth don't miss--
 Commotion's vast display -- all this
 I vow, of loved-One is.²

² *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 32.

The concept finds parallel expressions in the neo-Platonic system: “The All-Soul includes and is all the souls”. This finds an exact endorsement in Indian Vedantism, where the divine consciousness is understood to dwell within the human consciousness. Here is a quote from *Ashtavakra Geeta*:

You pervade this universe and this universe pervades in you. You are really pure consciousness by nature. Do not be small-minded.³

In a parallel exemplification of the four stages of Sufi conduct, James Fadiman endorses Ibn 'Arabi's explanation:

At the level of the law (shariah) there is "yours and mine". That is, the law guarantees individual rights and ethical relations between people. At the level of the Sufi path (tariqah)," mine is yours, yours is mine". The dervishes are expected to treat one another as brothers and sisters-- to open their homes, their hearts and their purses to one another. At the level of truth (haqiqah), there is "no mine and no yours"...At the level of Gnosis (marifah), there is "no me and no you".⁴

Hence, the move from 'shariah' to 'marifah' is a move from the clear cut distinction between "mine and yours" of 'shariah', to a sense of sharing and co-mutuality in the stage of 'tariqat', to a stage of denial of the categorical possession of worldly objects and articles as 'mine' and 'yours' to a final abnegation of the subjective binaries 'me' and 'you'. There is a lucid articulation of a similar sentiment in Bulleh Shah's famous kafi, “My love has made me forget/ Prayers, fasts and going on pilgrimages”:

³ *Ashtavakra Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nityaswarupananda. 1953. p 12.
The Sanskrit text reads:

RO; k 0; klrfena fo' oa i kra ; FkkFk-%A

शुद्धबुद्धस्वरूपस्त्वं मा गमः क्षुद्रचित्तताम॥

⁴ James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds. *Essential Sufism*. 1997. p 13.

I see him in every face;
 And yet people notice him not
 Here and there it's all his grace.⁵

For the Sufis, this ridding the mind of one's own separate self and of one's ego leads to a sense of identification with everything around us and an ultimate union with God himself. The following verse from Rumi, as adduced by James Fadiman, reinforces the same point:

If you could get rid
 Of yourself just once,
 The secret of secrets
 Would open to you.
 The face of the unknown,
 Hidden beyond the universe
 Would appear on the
 Mirror of your perception.⁶

Shah Abdul Latif interfuses his magnum opus, the *Risalo*, with the various stages leading to the attainment of the divine Beloved. In chapter one, while attempting to understand what Sufism purports, there is a realization that Sufi paradigm invariably tends to deconstruct mundane commonplace categories of binaries which explain the phenomenal world and form a part of quotidian discursive thought processes. Hence, in Sufi idiom, 'silence' does not connote void or vacuity; instead silence enables transcendence to a higher state of fullness. Again, it seems to be a topsy-turvy world, where words lose their normative connotations. For instance, 'Poverty', which connotes dearth and scarcity in the worldly sense, opens the panorama of spiritual

⁵ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p 65.
 The Punjabi version in Devnagri script reads:

जाँ मैं रमज़ इशक दी पाई,
 eḷu nrh ekj xolb]
 vlnj ckgj gkbz l i (kb]
 ftr oYy os[kla ; kjks ; kj
 b'kd nh ufovla uola cgkjA

(Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 97.)

⁶ *Sain Bulleh Shah: The Mystic Muse*. Trans. Kartar Singh Duggal. 1996. p. 23.

abundance, replete with universal harmony and inner joy. Again, in Sufi paradigm, the meaning of life and death undergoes a change. Life without God's love is death-like and death opens the ingress to a new life of union with the divine source. This is a possibility reserved only for a soul wallowing in love for the divine Beloved. Pedanticism, dogmaticism, and hair-splitting scholasticism becomes the same as a relapse into foolishness. In fact, this was the retort made by Abu Bakr Al Shibli to a scoffer in the market place who called Al Shibli a mad man:

“...you think I am mad, and I think you are sensible: May God increase my madness and your sense!” i.e., in as much as my madness is the result of my intense love of God, while your sense is the result of great heedlessness.⁷

‘Madness’ was a device that saved the life of many early Sufis in an antagonistic milieu. The other way out was silence or indirection in the expression of one’s inner faith in the unity of Being. Rumi suggests the same in *Fihi Ma Fihi* (It Is What It Is), where on the mystical plane it is left to the reader to cull ontological interpretations of the meaning of the universe and the human connection with the divine realm in his book of verses. Only a sensitive and perceptive mind could delve deep into those deeper revelations, which defy scientific and material proofs.

The chapter also explains the common ideas in the Sufi and the Bhakti traditions. The nature of revolt at the centre of both Sufi and Bhakti poetry was a breakdown of caste hierarchy; a dismantling of the polemics of religious elitism exercised by the Hindu as well as the Muslim priesthood; the establishment of direct connection between individual consciousness and his divine source; and a faith in the divine Being as not just approachable, but attainable. Sufi concept of ‘unity of Being’, ‘wahadat-ul-wujud’ coheres with the Bhakti concept of ‘Aham Brahmasmi’. The final stage of both is not just close approximation but union with the Supreme Being. Baba Farid began with experimentation in stringent and prolonged rounds of harsh asceticism but went on to pronounce the greater value of deep desire for the divine Beloved and a need for introspection instead of searching for the divine Beloved in the hermetic renunciation incurred in the jungles. Bhakti saint poet Namdev (1170-1350 AD) from Maharashtra

⁷ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 156.

rejects asceticism and ascends the realization of One God to be attained through unremitting personal love for the lord, pronounced as 'Vithola'. Chandidas in the thirteenth century in Bengal, strongly reverberates Bulleh Shah in his voice of revolt against traditional religious formalism. Kabir (1440-1518) stands as a Bhakti poet whose Hindu- Muslim ambiguous identity has as a concomitant a 'mixing of Vedantic monism with Islamic Sufism'.⁸ The following verses of Kabir

If caste was what the creator had in mind,
Why wasn't anyone born
With Siva's three-lined sign?
And if you're a Muslim
From a Muslim woman born,
Why weren't you circumscribed inside?
Hey brother, why do you want me to talk?
Talk and talk and the real thing gets lost.⁹

Such enunciations and their condemnation of official religion find parallel in Bulleh Shah's interrogation of socially denominated identities and the fixities of official religion as expressed in Bulleh Shah's famous kafi, "Bullah ki jaana mai kaun" and "Ilmon bas kareen O' yaar". Mirabai's (1503-1573) verses are imbued with intense feminine devotion for the divine beloved, very much like Bulleh Shah. The sense of desired union with the beloved is central to both. Although Mirabai belongs to the 'saguna' Bhakti tradition and Bulleh Shah's frame of reference to Kanha's flute is to the unheard cosmic music sweeter than manifest music heard through the senses, yet the quintessential sense of being overwhelmed by the beauty of the Supreme Being and desire for union with Him coheres in both, with the absence of physicality in the love of Heer as well as Meera for their respective divine Beloveds.

Chapter two dwells upon what makes up for the syncretic and inclusive sensibility of the religious and mystical instinct in the Indian sub-continent. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar's definition of 'Hindutva' is un-circumscribed by what is termed 'Hinduism', as something distinct from Islamic, Buddhist or Christian religion. It coheres well

⁸ Taufiq Rafat. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. 2014. p 10.

⁹ John Stratton Hawley and Mark Jurensmeier. *Songs of the Saints of India*. 2004. p 55.

with Motilal Jotwani's emphasis on Indian life being synergized by the power of new streams adding to the force of its existing flow. The mutually nourishing co-existence of the Bhakti, the Sufi, the Vedantic as well as the Buddhist and the Christian mystical instincts has enabled and nurtured the standards of friendship and love to be fostered and emulated by posterity. A glimpse of the historical and socio-cultural back-ground of Sindh and Punjab posits the gratuitousness and the pointlessness of creating a strict Hindu-Muslim dichotomy. The reasons unearthed in this chapter are the following:

- (i) The existence of Muslim poets writing in Hindi like Jayasi, Amir Khusrau, Kutuban, Rahim, Raskhan, Nazeer Akbarabadi, and Kabir completely demolished the factional discourse on communal grounds. Their writings completely dismantled the Hindu-Muslim ideational freeze.
- (ii) Stringent Hindu-Muslim dichotomy emerges as a myth. The Soomras who ruled over Sindh between 1010 A.D. and 1440 A.D. provide a testimony to the same. Understood as the Rajputs before the advent of Islam on the Indian soil, Mohan Gehani explains how tribes like Huns, Scythians, Lichvis and Bactrians, who settled down in India and accepted Hindu and Buddhist religions underwent conversion to Islam, either due to coercion or as a gesture of personal convenience. Since the group had allegiance neither towards Hinduism nor towards Buddhism, they converted to Islam.

These historical interactions led to a mixing of Hindu-Muslim identities and customs. This splintering of firm Hindu-Muslim identities is reflected in the folk-narratives of Sindh nurtured during the Soomra period. The Samma (1351-1519 A.D.) period also stood for Hindu-Muslim harmony. The chapter also dwells upon the ripples in such historical narratives of harmony and peace. Jam Nando, the epitome of Hindu-Muslim harmony, has a son called Jam Feroze, a reprobate and epicurean heir to the throne. The weakness and fragility of such a ruler invited foreign intrusion and led to the establishment of the Arghun dynasty, the descendents of Chaghe Khan and following atrocities on the masses.

The historical background of Punjab at the time of the emergence of Bulleh Shah (1680-1750 A.D.) was full of political unrest and social disquietude. Aurangzeb's (1658-1707 A.D.) reign of unjust and peremptory rule led to the strengthening of the Sikh guerrilla bands and the struggle for the liberation of Punjab. The active Sikh resistance made Bulleh Shah witness the bloodshed incurred on the masses and the consequent divine nemesis on the unjust rulers, when Bulleh Shah says, "ulte hor zamaane aaye"¹⁰ ("strange are the times/ crows swoop on hawks."¹¹)

The social and political disquietude led the layman in the direction of respite in the lap of the mystical font of human life. There was an escalation in the importance of dervishes, Sufi poets and scholars, whose unbiased sensibility emerged as the stronghold for the waning hopes of the dislocated and dis-oriented Punjab. the formation of the order of the khalsa and the emergence of *Guru Granth Sahib* as the epitome of the inclusive and composite culture of India paved the way for the confluence of the teachings of the Sikh gurus, the Bhakti saints and the Sufi saints. Attar Singh aptly appreciates the convergence of "the two great cultural streams: the Hindu-Sikh and the Muslim-Sufi".¹²

Chapter three situates Shah Latif within the matrix of the seminal Sufi poets of Sindh. His great ancestor Shah Abdul Karim's extraordinary mystical sensibility which made him focus not on the mechanical repetition of his lessons but on remembering God matches well with Shah Abdul Latif's instinctive disapproval of bookish learning. Instead, Latif endorsed inner faith. For Latif, his itinerary through religious pilgrimages on the face of earth becomes a stepping stone to mystical ascent up the divine ladder and becomes enabling in fortifying a connection with the divine Beloved. In a true Sufi spirit, communal discrimination and prejudice is not able to touch Latif's mystical instinct. Shah Latif gets as much solace in visiting Hingula devi in Baluchistan, one of the Shaktipeeths, as he received in his visit to the Kali temple in Sindh and as much by the Dwarka temple of Dwarkadhish, Lord Krishna. For Latif,

¹⁰ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 115

¹¹ Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal. *A History of Punjabi Literature*. 1992. p 35.

¹² Attar Singh. "Roots of Bulleh Shah's Tragic Sensibility". National Seminar on Bulleh Shah: Sufism and Bhakti in Medieval Indian Poetry. Punjab University Campus, Chandigarh, 14-15 September. Sahitya Akademi, 1981. p 12.

the empirical world became an index of divine benediction. His initially unfulfilled love for the earthly beloved propels him towards attainment of the divine Beloved. Latif was highly impressed by the yogis, who found in “negation Reality”¹³ and their persistent proclivity towards the infinite and the eternal realm, undefined by worldly restrictive categories.

Latif’s effusion of mystical ideas into the folk-narratives of Sindh enables two purposes:

- (i) the communal caste and class constraints undermined by the folk-narratives like Sasui-Punhu, Sohni-Sahar, Leela-Chanesar, Noori-Jam Tamachi act as a vehicle to re-inforce the saint-poet’s deconstruction of dichotomies which define worldly schismatic discourses.
- (ii) The employment of the folk narratives as the vehicle Latif’s mystical framework places Latif within the tradition of the Sindhi Sufi poets like Qazi Qazan (d. 1551), Shah Abdul Karim (1536-1620 A.D.) and Shah Inat (d. 1717).

Further, there are interesting concurrences among scriptures like the Holy *Quran*, and Sindhi Sufi poets Shah Latif and Shah Abdul Karim and others. God is closer to us than our jugular vein, says the holy *Quran*. Latif’s sur “Sasui Abri” says:

Thatched huts stand at the river-side. Foolish people
still die of thirst. Beloved is closer than human breath,
still we fail in our quest. We do not realize our very
breath and file grievances like helpless destitutes.¹⁴
(Translation mine)

¹³ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 76.

¹⁴ Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 126.
The Sindhi text in Devnagri script reads:

पाणीअ मथे झूपड़ि, मूर्ख उअ मरनि,
साहों ओडो सुपिरीं, लोचे तों न लहनि,
दमु न सुअपणि, दाहूँ कनि मुठनि जिअं।

Shah Abdul Karim registers a similar proximity between the human lover and the divine Beloved:

“I may be physically in this spot, O Umar,

But in my heart I am with the Marus in the Thar.¹⁵

Sachal Sarmast is more straight-forward and bluntly assertive in his poetic ejaculations:

What stupid issues you create, O Qazi

You don’t ever dwell upon the soul’s pangs of separation from Him.

You only scribble and smear white paper with ink.

Your thinking is very reductive and superficial.

Love’s destination is far away beyond the periphery of the mosque.¹⁶ (Translation mine)

On the other extreme are the Sufi poets like Hazrat Mian Mir who don’t express disapprobation of the shariat; ‘shariat’ is rather understood as a stepping stone towards ‘haqiqat’. Of course, ‘shariat’ was a hindrance in the path of attainment of the Beloved only if it was mistaken not as a means to an end, rather as an end in itself.

i kus ds fdukjs i j >ka Ma gā fi Qj Hkh e[k l ; kl se jrs gā (vk'p; Z g)A (Bhd
इसी तरह) साजन श्वासों से भी अधिक समीप हैं। फिर भी हम उसे ढूँढ़ नहीं
yrā vius ik.k dk igpkurs ughā v[g ofprikā dh rjg f'kdk; nā djrs gā

¹⁵ L.H. Ajwani. *History of Sindhi Literature*. 1970. p 64.

¹⁶ Srimati Janak Gorwani. *Sindh ki Triveni*. 2011. p 134.

The Sindhi version in Devnagri script reads:

क़ज़ियाँ, केहे मसइले करीन्दएँ
ckc fcjg nk dkbz u i <n, j
dkxt+fy [kn, a cxs cxs
मुल्लाँ दी दौड़ मसीतें ताई,
b'd nh efty vxs vxs -----
ds sel ys dktk [kMā-rw djrk gS
ckc rks fcjgka dk ugha i <rk gS nā
l i n&l i n dkxt} cl] dkys djrk gS nā
दौड़ तो मुल्ला की वहीँ तक जहाँ है मस्जिद।
efltn l s i js dgha vks gS b'd dh eftyA

Unlike, Sachal, Shah Latif expresses a preference for love of the divine Being to the secondariness of “fasts and holy prayers”, with a certain sense of tolerance and mild disapproval:

These fasts and holy prayers
Are surely good things all,
But the wisdom were withal,
To sight thy love is different quite.¹⁷

Again we hear Latif in sur “Asa” :

Make a pillow of the Tariqat, know the Shariat, train the
heart to practice truth and recognize the lane leading to
that knowledge. Lose yourself in the cosmic unity. It
will save you from drowning in the sea of ignorance.¹⁸
(Translation mine)

The basic Sindhi Sufi psyche, in consonance with the Indian Vedantic thought is seen to place human being in an anthropocentric system where he is invested with interminable possibilities and accomplishments. Ashtavakrageeta says:

Wonderful am I! Adoration to myself! There is none so
capable as I, who am bearing the universe for all
eternity without touching It with the body.¹⁹
Wonderful am I! Adoration to myself who have nothing
or have all that is thought and spoken of.²⁰

¹⁷ S.M.Jhangiani. *Shah Abdul Latif and his Times*. 1986. p 20.

¹⁸ Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 233.

करी तरीकत तकियो, शरीअत सुजाणु,

fgavka gdhidr gfj rj ekxq ekji qr tki q

होई साबूतीअ साणु, त पुसणौ पालिहो रही।

तरीकत को मसनद बना, शरीकत को जान, हृदय को सत्य की ओर अभ्यस्त

dj] ml Kku dh xyh dk igpkuA v[k.Mrk ea fey tk rks Hkol kxj ea

Micus l j ; gh fytr gkus l scp tk, xla

¹⁹ *Ashtavakra Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nityaswarupananda. 1953. p 24. The Sanskrit text reads:

vgks vga uels ega n{ks ukLrhg eRI e%a

vI l i" ; 'kjhjs k ; u fo'oa fpja /reAA 13 AA

²⁰ Ibid. p 25. The Sanskrit text reads:

Sachal denominates human being as ‘*Sultan*’ (king), the acme of God’s creation who exudes majestic splendour:

The Satguru explained to me, O Sachal! You are the
King.²¹ (Translation mine.)

In Sufi parlance, human being becomes the sovereign of the universe by renouncing not just material possessions but even his egotistic self. Shah Inat (1613-1719 A.D.) is seen as Latif’s predecessor, philosopher and guide. Motilal Jotwani aptly expresses the idea that without some of these predecessors like Shah Inat, the heights reached by Latif in his mystical enunciations would have appeared “very sudden.”²² Shah Inat’s great respect for the ‘yogis’ finds a parallel in Latif’s intense desire for the company of yogis, the ultimate ascetics:

If you want to be a yogi, relinquish as company.
Connect only with those who never take birth. Then
there is a possibility that you reach the destination in the
discourse of love.²³

Further, there emerges a resultant set of poetic enunciations from the gestalt of a mystical sensibility, which endorses non-duality (‘advaitic framework’) in Indian Vedantism and the Sufi concept of ‘hama ost’ (‘All is He’). These poetic articulations

अहो अहं नमो महं यस्य में नास्ति किञ्चन।

अथवा यस्य मे सर्वं यद्वाङ्मनसगोचरम् ॥ 14 ॥

²¹ Srimati Janak Gorwani. *Sindh ki Triveni*. 2011. p 116.

The Sindhi text in Devnagri script reads:

I rxj I pq I q kk; kj I pk rñ I yrkuq

I rxq us e p s I e > k; kj dgk I py! rñ g s I yrkuA

²² Motilal Jotwani. “Introduction.” *Four Classical Poets of Sindh*. G. Allana. *Four Classical Poets of Sindh*. 1996. p 1.

²³ Motilal Jotwani. ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 205.

The Sindhi text in Devnagri script reads:

जे भाई जोगी थियां, त सङ सभेई टोड़ि,

ts tkok u tkinkj thm ruha ls tkfM}

r rñ i g p h a r k f M} e g C c r t s e f k u e A

; f n r e t k x h g l u k p l g r s g k r k l c i d k j d s l a x r k M + n k A t k s u t l e s

v k j u t l e x j m u l s g h v i u k t h t k M / A r c l k k o g s r e e g C c r d s

मैदान में मंज़िल तक पहुँचो।

abrogate all dichotomies and schismatic binaries between ‘I’ and ‘you’ as well as human and divine. Says Latif in sur “Kalyan”:

He is this and He is that
 He alone is life and death
 He is the beloved, the breath He
 Himself friend and foe
 Here and there
 He reigns in every soul.
 He witnesses all with his own light²⁴. (Translation
 mine)

This is the ultimate step towards the ‘real’-ization of the unity of Being. Sufis of Sindh foreground the affirmative mystical impulses which resist religious conformity and confirm a-religious assimilation of mystical instincts which take the human seeker close to the divine Beloved, ending in absolute coalescence with the divine Being. A re-hash at the prominent Sufi poets of Sindh creates a cumulative picture of the contours of Sufism in Sindh.

Chapter four presents the novelty and the peculiarity of Sufi poets like Bulleh Shah as his successful attempt at bringing the esoteric metaphysics of the classical scriptures down to the amphitheatre of common human understanding steeped in the folk-lore of Punjab. Bulleh Shah’s poetic enunciations emerge as the off-shoots of the mystical matrix of the Indian sub-continent. These mystical enunciations evince reverberations of parallel texts from the non-dualism of Shankaracharya, the stringent ascetic practices of the natha-yogic tradition of Gorakhnath and the Indian Vedantic tradition. While Shankaracharya’s non-dualistic framework relegates the phenomenal empirical

²⁴ Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans. Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 74.
 The Sindhi text in Devnagri script reads:

l k ghm l ks gj l ks vt yq l ks vYykgj
 l ks fi jha l ks i l kgj l ks ogh l ks olg:]
 l kbZ gMf सोई होइ, सोई मन वसे,
 l kbZ l ks i l j rfga l ns l kf>jA
 ogh ; g gS vks ogh og gA ogh tohu vks eR; q gA ogh fiz vks ogh
 i k.k gA ogh nqeu vks nkr gA ogh b/j vks ogh m/j gA ogh l cds
 eu ea cl k gvk gA og vius izdk'k l s l c dN ns[k jgk gA

world as illusive and unreal, Bulleh Shah invests the phenomenal world with the adjectives ‘jaadu’ and ‘saaya’, which become the index of divine reality and point towards the existence of the divine reality. For Sufis like Bulleh Shah God is to be realized in this life. Bulleh Shah arrives at the unity of all existence through a dual-route of negating his belongingness to worldly discursive categories or through accepting his identity with all that exists. The former route is a method of relieving the mind of all pre-conceived notions and centripetal consciousness. The latter is an attempt at arriving at a centrifugal consciousness, where there is a nullification of all distinctions and dichotomies between the self and the other. Bulleh Shah’s eclecticism and inclusive sensibility is another gesture at the erasure of distinctions between ‘I’, ‘we’, ‘you’ and ‘they’. The *modus operandi* for such an attainment is delving deep into the ocean of love and arriving at a stage where the poet says: “*ishq bhulaaya sijdaa tera*”²⁵. All distinctions are lost. The human and the divine realm merge into a single entity. The task of the Sufi par excellence is accomplished.

Chapter five brings forth a comparative study of the poetic enunciations of Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah and charts a parallel teleology of the mystical graph of the two poets with reference to the myriad facets of Sufi mysticism. The mystical parallelisms between Sufi framework of Latif and Bulleh Shah is understood with an inter-textual analysis alongside Sufi predecessors like Jalaludin Rumi, Farid-ud-din Attar’s *The Conference of Birds* and the Vedantic advaitic framework as embodied in *The Bhagwad Gita*, the Upanishadic references and *Ashtavakrageeta*. The ‘*modus operandi*’ for the attainment of this centrality is, ironically, through introspection, self-effacement and through silence. The conclusive thought in the attainment of the divine Beloved is that the Beloved is to be found with a soulful introspective turn into the deepest recesses of the heart. A sincere seeker need not go to the jungles or to the mountains. The battle-field for the battle to be won is within. Says Latif in sur “Sasui Abri”:

Why do you go to woods remote?

Why not your love search here?

²⁵ Vinod Shahi. *Bulleh Shah: Samay aur Path*. 2012. p 84.

Believe, not hiding anywhere is your Beloved Hoat...

Look deep into yourself and note

Beloved's home is there.—²⁶

Folk narratives play a very significant role in bolstering the belief of people in virtues and values by which they live. The topography of Sindh as well as Punjab is evocative of the imagination of the common folk and allows the layman to indulge in and re-live those folk-narratives which form the psychological repertoire of the people. The question about the truthfulness and veracity of these narratives is redundant.

The disruptive foreign invasions led to a veritable bid for peace and settled psychological conditions in the minds of the laymen. The topography and agrarian economy would be conducive to the growth and nurturing of the folk narratives seeped in the language of both the provinces.

1. The life-sustaining and life-affirming value of these folk tales is the pulse of the people of Punjab and Sindh even today. People live with these narratives inscribed in their hearts. The truth value of these folk tales is less important than their value as a life-affirming force. That is why the real, factual, empirical, verifiable, material categories of existence are complemented by the not so real, the folk, the mythical, yet life-enhancing tropes ingrained in the psychology of the people. People are the source of these narratives, live with these narratives and gain strength from them in the vicissitudes of everyday life.

The process of union with the Supreme godhead or the Beloved in the Sufi paradigm is a journey from 'becoming' to 'being', a transformation from crystallization in one's individual egoistic subjectivity to 'be'-ing one with the divine Beloved, the supreme

²⁶ *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*. Trans. Elsa Kazi. 1965. p 121.

جو تُوں مڪڙي، ا مڙي] لک لک ڪوڙي لک لک رکي
 ykyu yb] yrhi p,] ekkh Fkh] ektij]
 eak iava i: fm] rks ef> vkfgl h rfd; ka
 ftls rwnj&nj [kkt jgh gs og rks l nk rjs l kfk ga dfo dgrs g
 ykyu ds fy, gs vcyd rwnlre k ga vlnj l s l e>A ml dk fuokl
 rjs gh vlnj ga (Motilal Jotwani, ed. *Shah Latif ka Kavya*. Trans.
 Manishankar Dwivedi. 1969. p 126.)

consciousness. This merger is the common point of intersection in the apparently varied discourses of the Indian Vedantism, the medieval Bhakti tradition and the Sufi paradigm. The tradition of the bhakti hagiography describes Meera Bai's soul merging into the Supreme consciousness of her divine beloved Giridhar Gopal so that her life culminates in this sublime merger leaving only the end of her 'saree' at the temple of Dwarika. This merger is in consonance with the articulation of ultimate oneness of the knower, the knowable and the knowledge, 'gyata', 'gyeyam' and 'gyanam' respectively and as articulated in *Ashtavakra Geeta*, the text used by Ramakrishna Paramhansa to pass on the legacy of 'advaita' Vedanta to his disciple Swami Vivekananda:

Knowledge, knower and knowable-- these three do not in reality exist. I am that stainless (Self) in which this triad appears through ignorance.)²⁷

Interestingly, R.A.Nicholson's book *Sufis: The Mystics of Islam*, in its first chapter "The Path" discusses two aspects of the mystical development of a Sufi:

- (i) that the seeker of God becomes a traveller (salik); "he advances by slow 'stages' ('maqamat') along a 'path' ('tariqat') to the goal of union with Reality (fana fi'l- Haqq). These stages are a result of "the ascetic and ethical discipline of a Sufi"²⁸ and described as "abstinence, renunciation, repentance, poverty, patience, trust in God and satisfaction".²⁹
- (ii) The states ('hal') which God bestows upon the seeker correspond to the successive stages in his movement towards perfection in seeking the Beloved.

Nicholson's explanation of the culmination of the Sufi path concludes hence:

Then and only then, is he permanently raised to the higher planes of consciousness which Sufis call 'the Gnosis' (ma'rifat) and 'the Truth'(haqiqat), where the

²⁷ *Ashtavakra Geeta*. Trans. Swami Nityaswarupananda.1953.Web. 27 Jan. 2019. p 26.
The Sanskrit text reads:

Kkua Ks a rFlk Kkrk rr; e uklrh okLroeA

अज्ञानाद्भाती यत्रेदं सोहमऽस्मी निरंजनः॥

²⁸ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mystics of Islam*. Kindle ed., IndoEuropean Publishing, 2010. N Pag.

²⁹ Ibid.

‘seeker’ (talib) becomes the ‘knower’ or ‘gnostic’ (‘arif’), and realizes that knowledge, knower, and known are One.³⁰

The path traversed by the mystic pronounced in the Indian mystical treatise, the *Ashtavakra Geeta* and the one traversed by a Sufi, as delineated by a Sufi scholar, culminates in the parallel description of union between “Gyanam gyeyyam tatha gyaata”(knowledge, known, and knower). This is the heart of Sufi understanding of the hermeneutics of human efforts to attain the divine Beloved. Here is the creation of an interface between the two aspects of divine connection with His creation: ‘Huwiyyat’ and ‘aniyyat’. While the former is a realization of the divine Being as reflected in his creation, an intuitive ascent towards God’s existence; the latter entails God’s exhibiting His grandeur in the created world, a downward materialization of God’s presence in the created world. Coalescence of the two aspects of God’s existence leads to a non-dualistic worldview, where the seeker experiences a sense of identity between supposed dichotomies like inside/outside and human/divine. This is how the Sufis reconcile the transcendence of the divine Being with the immanence of the same divine Reality in every trace of God’s creation.

Sufism can play a vital role in harmonizing Hindu-Muslim friction. In today’s world of segregationist politics and pervasive communal and divisive impulses, there is a requisite need for revival of the Sufi impulse. Their unreserved synchronization and the impetus of mystical evolution in a pluralistic society is the need of the day. Where on the one hand, in today’s fast-moving world of scintillating veneer, pompousness, rationalism and intellectualism, Sufi paradigm appears to be an outdated excrescence, on the other, it has become the quintessential need of the time. In the modern world of communal conflict, splintered consciousness, materialism, utilitarianism and self-centred secession from the common weal, Sufism appears as an antidote to salvage and retrieve the mind of all human ills, flaws and fallacies.

³⁰ R.A. Nicholson. *Sufism: The Mystics of Islam*. Kindle ed., IndoEuropean Publishing, 2010. N Pag.